

58-60

PREFACES

PREFACES

BY

DON MARQUIS
AUTHOR OF "HERMIONE," ETC.



DECORATIONS BY

TONY SARG



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK LONDON

1919

96.3
m357
pr

COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY
THE SUN PRINTING AND PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

424603
TO WILL
MAGNUS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
MY SISTERS
MINERVA VIRGINIA MARQUIS
AND
BERNICE MAUDE MARQUIS
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

424603



CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF LITERARY REMINIS- CENCES	3
PREFACE TO A COOK BOOK	13
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF FISHHOOKS	23
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF CIGARETTE PAPERS	39
PREFACE TO THE PLAYS OF EURIPIDES	47
PREFACE TO A CAT SHOW CATALOGUE	57
PREFACE TO THE PROSPECTUS OF A CLUB	63
PREFACE TO A MEDIUM'S DOPE BOOK	73
PREFACE TO A TREATISE ON A NEW ART	81
PREFACE TO A MEMORANDUM BOOK	91
PREFACE TO A HANGMAN'S DIARY	103
PREFACE TO A VOLUME OF POETRY	111
PREFACE TO OLD DOCTOR GUMPH'S ALMANAC	121
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF PARAGRAPHS	129
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF PATTERNS	137
PREFACE TO THE WORKS OF BILLY SUNDAY	145
PREFACE TO A CALENDAR	153

Contents

	PAGE
PREFACE TO A STUDY OF THE CURRENT STAGE	161
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF SAFETY PINS	167
PREFACE TO THE NOVELS OF HAROLD BELL WRIGHT	175
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF STATISTICS	183
PREFACE TO A MORAL BOOK OF ARITHMETIC .	193
PREFACE TO A BOOK WITHHELD	203
PREFACE TO HOYT'S RULES	213
PREFACE TO THE DIARY OF A FAILURE	221
FOREWORD TO A LITERARY CENSOR'S AUTO- BIOGRAPHY	229
NOTE TO A CHAPTER ON JOURNALISM	239
FOREWORD TO A MISER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY	247
PREFACE TO A CHECK BOOK	255
PREFACE TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN OLD- FASHIONED ANARCHIST	263
PREFACE TO AN UNPUBLISHED VOLUME	271
PREFACE TO A BOOK OF PREFACES	281

*Preface to a Book of Literary
Reminiscences*





Preface to a Book of Literary Reminiscences

THEY are tearing the old chop house down—the Eheu Fugaces chop house—to build on its site a commercial enterprise, a sordid publishing house. . . . So passes another literary landmark; mere business triumphs again over the Arts.

It was in 1850 that Jack Whittier first brought me in to dinner there. Jolly Jack Whittier! There was a wit and a true Bohemian for you! His quickness at a repartee was marvelous. Mike Cervantes was drinking in the bar as we passed through.

“Hello, Jack,” hiccupped Mike, “been snow-bounding lately?”

Prefaces

"No," said Whittier, with a sidelong look at Mike's glass, "nor skating either."

"Ralphie Emerson has more humor," Ollie Holmes used to say, "but, after all, Whittier is wittier!"

Eheu Fugaces, the proprietor, had a flavor of his own. "Wines aren't what they were," he was forever saying. "Nor Bourbons either," he added one day, glancing at Hal Bourbon, afterward King of France as Henri Quatre, but just then in exile and down on his luck.

Bourbon was a lean fellow and rather black-guardly; he used to sit all day when he had had a bit of good fortune eating buckwheat cakes soaked in olive oil and molasses, with caraway seeds sprinkled over them. . . . "Georgie," he would say to our favorite waiter, George Moore, "I miss something in you that I feel you *should* have, but I am not sure just what it is. *Could* it be pimples?"

Georgie Moore was forever trying to write; he used to hang about the tables and listen when the grown men told racy stories and would spend his leisure time writing them down as if

Preface to a Book of Literary Reminiscences

he himself had been the hero of them. I never heard him say anything but "*Chacun à son goût!*" except once, and then, seeing Frankie Bret Harte about to fall to hungrily upon an Irish stew into which Georgie himself had slyly slipped a cockroach, he varied it with "*Chacun à son ragout!*"

Eheu Fugaces' place was the home of the *jeu de mot*. . . . "Disraeli," said Walt Whitman one afternoon as we were sipping our toddies, "your wit makes me positively giddy!" "Me, too," said Beaconsfield, "it's my wit that makes me Dizzy!" And then he added, after reflecting for only a moment or two, "Walt, I am a *jeu de mot*."

How New York changes! In those days the Battery was far uptown, and as for Bowling Green—well, Bowling Green was in Yonkers. . . . It was Felicia Hemans, I think, who created a sensation one evening by asking N. P. Willis—(or maybe it was Nat Wills; it was either Nat Wills or Nat Willis)—"What is a Yonker?" . . . The *mot*, however, has been attributed to Jane Taylor, who used often to

Prefaces

come to dinner with Jane Austen and Fenimore Cooper.

The Two Janes, we called them. Dear Janes! I wonder if there is another man alive who remembers the night Jane Taylor and Jane Austen recited in unison "The Face on the Barroom Floor" while Nero played chords on his ukelele? . . . Eheu Fugaces, the proprietor, used to say, "The new Janes aren't what the old Janes were!"

Shakespeare was tending bar in the place at the time, but he was never quite one of us. Eddie Poe would snort and remark: "Shakespeare! He is self-consciously imitating what John Masefield did because Masefield needed a job, that is what he is doing! Deliberately and affectedly *pseudojohnmasefielding!*" I think we all felt a little that way about him—that he was there to study the place and pick up local color, in his sharp way, with an eye to using it later. But Colley Cibber took him up, and later the Frohmans patronized the man, and I hear that he is finally on his way toward real success and a try-out in the movies. His verse

Preface to a Book of Literary Reminiscences

was always a little too dressy for my liking; but, as Georgie Moore liked to murmur: “*Chacun à son goût!*”

Ah! the gay parties! The old days! The present generation does not know what Bohemia was! There are certain mechanical imitators, and imitations—but the *esprit*. Where is *l'esprit*? Where is Bohemia? Where, for that matter, is *l'empire des lettres*? Where? It is enough to make *les larmes-aux yeux!* . . . At that time there were fish in the Aquarium, just as there are to-day—but, naturally, fish with a difference. Roaring Hank Longfellow and I, one night, coming in rather elevated, I must confess, after a gay party in Bushwick (now a part of Brooklyn), where Felicia Hemans had recited some of her own poems, as well as “*Lasca*” and “*Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night!*”—Hank and I somewhat boisterously demanded grilled goldfish of old Eheu Fugaces. Eheu referred us in his ironical way to the Aquarium. “Well,” cried Hank Longfellow, who fairly bubbled with wit at all times, “there's as good fish in the Aquarium

as have ever been caught!" "There's no such thing," said Eheu Fugaces. "Fish aren't what they were in Jonah's day at all."

But Hank and I were off. It must have been a *very* gay party in Bushwick, for we wound up at the Hippodrome instead of the Aquarium, and seined from a tank a young woman, whose name I forget—she was the Annette Kellermann of that day—whom we brought back to Eheu's place with a demand that she be grilled at once. . . . "Let her be stewed!" shouted Wash Irving, wag that he was.

Swinburne was there that evening; Theodore Watts-Dunton used to bring him in for a few minutes now and then, shackled, and let him have a cup of cambric tea through a straw. The straw was necessary, as Watts-Dunton kept him muzzled for fear he would suddenly begin declaiming some of his own more sensuous poetry, and the shackles were to prevent him writing. When Jane Taylor, Jane Austen, Millard Fillmore and the young woman from the Hippodrome tank flung themselves into an impromptu dance—the Two Janes displaying

Preface to a Book of Literary Reminiscences

a quarter of an inch of comely, clocked stocking beneath their flowing pantalettes—Swinburne became excited and began to jingle his shackles. But Teddy Watts-Dunton dragged the old gentleman away, screaming and pulling back against his chain, and passionately trampling the cup which had contained the cambric tea.

Queen Victoria I never saw at Eheu's chop house, but Gladstone and Lincoln, both always wearing neatly polished boots, and both with heavy gold watch chains with seals dangling from them, often dropped in arm in arm.

I remember Lincoln regarding little Billy-Cul Bryant quizzically as Billy sat in the upper part of the icebox, unconsciously crushing a consignment of ripe tomatoes, writing "Thanatopsis." "Read it aloud, Billy-Cul," said Abie. And when Billy-Cul had done so Abie remarked humorously: "It's got some awful good words in it, Billy-Cul, but what's it all about?"

But this was only affectation on Abie's part; he really liked "Thanatopsis," and had caught the drift of it at once; when he thought Glad-

Prefaces

stone was not looking he allowed his face to become very sad and furrowed again and fumbled with his seals and wiped away a tear. . . .

The dear old icebox! That, too, will be dismantled, I suppose, or scalded out, at least, and the zinc lining will lose its patina—that patina of which Geordie Moore used to say, as he ran his critical thumb nail over it, "*Chacun à son goût!*" . . . Eheu Fugaces and his merry crew. . . . I knew them well! I knew them When!

Preface to a Cook Book



Preface to a Cook Book

AN elderly gentleman who found me a bore once asked me desperately, "Are you fond of literature?"

"I dote upon it," I said.

He was a painter; we had met at a kind of tea where every one was talking of art and literature and things like that; we hated each other at once because each had been told that the other was interesting.

"Oh, you *dote* on it!" he said, after a moment of venomous silence.

"I do!" I replied firmly.

He sneered; it was evident that he wished me to understand that he was incredulous.

"Sir," I said, striving with all the rancor of my nature to be offensive, "sir, are *you* fond of literature?"

Prefaces

“I am,” he said, putting on a pair of eye-glasses, and looking as if he might look like Whistler if he thought me worth wasting the look on.

“What *sort* of literature are you fond of?” I asked.

“I am fond of Lord Tennyson’s Poems,” he retorted insultingly.

I permitted myself a faint, superior smile. It maddened him, as I intended it should; his nose turned a whitish blue as the blood receded from his face.

“Did you ever read any of Meredith?” I asked.

“I did!” he replied.

I turned toward the fireplace, as if willing to veil a doubt.

He took off his glasses; he pointed at me a long, bony digit that trembled with anger.

“Did *you*?”

“Yes,” I said.

“What?” he demanded.

“For one thing,” I told him, “‘The Egoist.’”

I dwelt upon *The Egoist* as if I tasted a

Preface to a Cook Book

subtle, ulterior jest in mentioning it to *him*. I hoped that would puzzle him.

“One of Meredith’s lesser known pieces, no doubt,” he said.

“Oh, no!” I affirmed.

“Not so well known as ‘Lucile,’ ” he asserted.

“ ‘Lucile’?”

“What—you do not mean that you have never read Owen Meredith’s masterpiece, ‘Lucile’!”

“Owen!” I gasped; but before I could do more than gasp he quoted:

“ *We may live without poetry, music or art,
We may live without conscience, and live without heart,* ”

We may live without friends, we may live without books;

But civilized man cannot live without cooks.’ ”

The next instant our hostess was upon us, murmuring with a bright, arch smile: “Ah! Locksley Hall! Those old Victorian things were wonderful in their way, after all . . . were they not? I knew you two dear men

Prefaces

would be just simply wild about each other!"
. . . She was that sort of hostess.

Those lines were printed in blue and gold, with a red border around them, in the front of a Cook Book that was one of my grandmother's wedding presents. Above them was the picture of an ample and dimpled young woman in a white apron, who was smiling and mixing something in a bowl. I cannot remember the time when I was not aware that this young woman's name was Dorcas. No one ever told me that her name was Dorcas, but the knowledge somehow came to me while I was still in kilts, and it is as Dorcas that I think of her to this day.

One glanced at her and knew at once the sort of things that Dorcas would cook, that Dorcas was born to cook. Never, in later life, have I sat down to dinner without saying to myself, "Ah! things look Dorcassy to-night!" or, "Alas! there is nothing Dorcassy here."

Do not mistake me; my affection for Dorcas was (and is) based upon nothing so simple as her air of bucolic wholesomeness. I am no ad-

Preface to a Cook Book

vocate of plain cooking. Dorcas was not a Plain Cook. She was the mistress of seven hundred complications, and in them she rejoiced. If there was an apparent simplicity in the result, that appearance proceeded from the excellent art of Dorcas which subdued many ingredients to a delicious unison. For she was an artist.

But she was not a scientist. Dorcas had never studied culinary chemistry. If you had tried to talk seriously to Dorcas about her gastric juices she would have been as shocked as if you had mentioned her legs. Dorcas cooked for the sight and smell and soul and palate of Man; his digestion did the best it could. She betrayed Man's duodenum, and he loved her for it.

And suppose the richness of Dorcas *did* ruin one's digestion. What then? Is the digestion a god that we should regard it reverently? To my mind there is something base in considering one's digestion as if it were one of the higher attributes. I like to see a reckless, adventurous, headstrong, romantic, dashing sort of eater. I

like the vaunting spirit that proclaims, "By heaven, I will conquer that plum pudding or die!"

— Let us be sensible about this thing. . . . An Average Man may eat the Dorcas Cooking from infancy on to the age of forty years before he becomes an incurable dyspeptic. Suppose, then, he must retire to poached eggs and malted milk—what memories he has to look back upon!

I once had a second cousin, a prudent boy, who thought a great deal of his digestion; Dorcas could not tempt him; he knew all about his alimentary canal and gave himself as many airs as a bumptious young anchorite who has just donned his first hair shirt. He exasperated me; if he had been deliberately saving his digestion for the first thirty-five years of life in order to enjoy it to the full and with more mature discrimination during the latter thirty-five I could have understood him. But no—he intended to eat poached eggs and malted milk to the frugal end.

But the universe is not on the side of frugal-

Preface to a Cook Book

ity; the stars were hurled broadcast from the hand of a spendthrift God. . . . Cousin Tom, going back to his office after a lunch of oatmeal crackers on his twenty-eighth birthday, was killed by a brick which fell from the chimney of a chop house in which I sat eating a steak *en casserole* with mushrooms and thinking sentimentally of Dorcas. He died without issue, and carried his gastric juices unimpaired to the grave. In a way I took a certain satisfaction in his death, as it proved the folly of prudence; and yet I wept at the funeral, for the thought struck me, "What could I not do with Tom's practically virgin digestive organs if he had but contrived to leave them to me!"

There was a stomach that had never really lived . . . and now it never would!

It is better to go swaggering through the gates of life loose-lipped and genial and greedy, embracing pleasures and suffering pains, than to find one's self, in the midst of caution, incontinently slain by chance and eaten by worms.

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks



Preface to a Book of Fishhooks X

THIS little book of flies and hooks and guts and hackles, which was presented to us by a friend who heard us say we liked to go fishing—we may as well admit at once that it is full of riddles we cannot rede. We know nothing about trout, and have no great ambition to learn. Fishing for trout has too much exertion and bodily effort about it to be attractive. One tramps about over rough country and gets one's self wet in cold water, and tangles one's hook in one's hair and ears, and all that sort of thing.

Our idea of fishing is to put all the exertion up to the fish. If they are ambitious we will catch them. If they are not, let them go about their business. If a fish expects to be caught by us he has to look alive. We give him his

opportunity, and he must make the most of it.

Most of our fishing, and the only fishing we ever really enjoyed, was done with a worm, a hook, a leaden sinker, a line and a willow pole. We wouldn't know what to do with a reel. We expect a fish to eat the hook very thoroughly, to persist until he gets it well down and then to signal us that all is well by pulling the float under water; a reel is superfluous; one flips the pole over one's head and the fish lands somewhere in the bushes behind.

A little quiet river or a creek, with low banks and plenty of big trees along the banks, is the only place to fish; and the fish should be mostly bullheads. Bullheads know their business; they hook themselves more completely and competently than any other fish. A bullhead will swallow the worm, the hook, and the lead sinker, a part of the line, and then grumble because he hasn't been able to eat the float and the pole. And you can leave it all up to him. You can sit in the shade and watch the float bobbing and jerking about in the serene consciousness that he will do a good job. When

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks

he pulls the pole itself out of the socket of earth into which you have jabbed the butt end of it, then is the time to interfere and bring him to land. Don't hold the pole yourself; it is too much trouble.

Being out of the water doesn't make much difference to the average bullhead. We don't suppose he could stand it more than two or three days, unless there was a damp wind blowing, but a few hours more or less are nothing to him. After having eaten as much of your fishing tackle as you will permit him to have before interfering, you might think that he would be a little dejected. But not so. You go to take the hook out of him, and he rushes at you and horns you, with a queer purring noise, and shows every disposition to fight it out on land.

And he seldom knows when he is dead. Often in the course of a day we have caught a bushel or so of bullheads and thrown them into the back of the buggy and driven home with them, five or six miles, maybe. Arrived at home we would find them stiff and caked with

dried mud and dust, and to all appearances dead, having been out of the water and jogging along in the hot afternoon sun for a couple of hours. But throw them into a barrel of water, and in a few minutes they were swimming around as if nothing had happened, grinning over the top of the barrel and begging for more worms and hooks and lead sinkers. Refreshed by his cool plunge, the beast was ready for another romp. The bullhead is not a beautiful fish, and has no claims to aristocracy, but he is enduring.

We never liked to fish from a boat. You have to row the thing about, and that is a lot of trouble. Select a big, shady tree that bends over a pool in some little inland stream and lie down under the tree, and lie there all day and fish and eat and smoke and chew tobacco and watch the dragonflies and spit into the water. If you feel like swimming a little, all right—it doesn't particularly bother the bullheads. But it is a mistake to go to sleep.

If you go to sleep while you are loafing, how are you going to know you are loafing? And

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks

if you don't know it, what satisfaction is there in it? And it is also a mistake to think too deeply. If you do that, about the time you begin to get on the track of the secret of the universe some fool fish will hook himself, and you will have to attend to him.

Lie with your hat over your face and watch thoughts carefully from under the brim of it as they come toward you out of the woods or up the creek. And if a thought that seems as if it were going to be too profound or troublesome tries to crawl up on you shoo it away and wait for an easy thought. And when you get an easy thought hold on to it and think it for a long time and enjoy it.

The best thoughts to have when you are fishing are the thoughts about what you would do if you had a million dollars. After a while you get sort of lenient toward the world, and unambitious, and think it's a little selfish of you to want a whole million, and say "Shucks! I'd be willing to take a hundred thousand!" And you think maybe if you roused up a little and looked over the edge of the bank you would

see a streak of gold in the soil, and then you would go and buy that land of the farmer that owns it and get rich off of the gold. And then you remember that you don't know who owns the land and it would be considerable trouble to have to ask questions around and find out. So it doesn't seem worth while to look over the edge of the bank and see whether the gold is there after all. And, anyhow, would it be fair, to whatever farmer owns the land, to buy it knowing there was gold on it and never tell him? And what would you buy it with? If you borrowed money to buy it with the fellow you borrowed the money from would likely get the biggest part of it, and you would have all your work and worry for nothing, and so you don't look to see if the gold is there. And then you get to thinking that probably there aren't many people honest enough to pass up a fortune like that just simply because somebody else owns it and you admire yourself for being that honest.

You can find more things to admire yourself for, lying around fishing like that, if you pick

your thoughts properly. Everybody ought to do it all the time and not work at anything else.

• • • • •

Several friends and literary advisers to whom we have shown the foregoing preface have taken the trouble to intimate that they do not believe what we have said concerning the fish known as the bullhead; namely, that he can live out of water for several hours. This only shows how little some people know about bullheads. We might have told a story of a particular bullhead far more incredible, and equally true, but that we are aware of this general lack of exact information concerning bullheads and did not care to have our statements questioned by the ignorant.

This particular bullhead we caught and tamed when we were about twelve years old, and named him Mr. Hoskins because of his facial resemblance to a neighbor. Mr. Hoskins—not the fish, but the fish's godfather—had fallen from a windmill in youth, upon his head, and his head had been getting larger ever since, until he seemed all head, with a few

wiry spikes of beard and mustache around his mouth. His intellect had not grown as his head grew; the poor man used to go about calling attention to his large head, saying: "I fell off a windmill and the hogs ate me, all but my head—see my head!" He was pathetically proud of it. The fish looked like him, and with the heedless cruelty of boyhood we named the bullhead Mr. Hoskins.

Mr. Hoskins (the fish) dwelt in an old wash boiler under a maple tree. And it was beneath this maple tree that we used to feed all our other animals every morning—a black dog, a crow, a black and orange cat, a brown dog called Gustavus Adolphus after the Terrible Swede of that name and an owl known (for we had been reading Dumas) as the Duchess de Montpensier. At that time, and in that place, the village butcher would give one a whole basketful of scraps and bones for a dime; the dogs, the cat, the crow and the Duchess would range themselves, solemnly expectant, in a row under the maple tree and catch the bits of meat we tossed to them in their mouths or beaks,

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks

no animal stepping out of his or her place in line and no animal offering to bite or peck its neighbor.

Mr. Hoskins, the bullhead, would come to the surface of the water and peer with one eye over the rim of the boiler, watching these proceedings closely. At first he watched them grouchily, we thought. A bullhead, however, is somewhat handicapped in the expression of the lighter and gayer emotions; his face is so constructed that even if he feels otherwise than gloomy and ill-humored he cannot show it. But as the spring wore into summer it seemed to us that Mr. Hoskins was getting friendlier, somehow. One day we tossed him a piece of meat and he snapped at it. After that we ranged the other beasts in a circle around the wash boiler, and if Gustavus Adolphus or the Duchess de Montpensier missed a piece of meat it fell to Mr. Hoskins. In ten days Mr. Hoskins could catch as well as any of them.

One morning we were alarmed to see that Mr. Hoskins's boiler had been overturned during the night, no doubt by some thirsty cow. He

Prefaces

seemed dead when we picked him up and we dug a hole in the ground and threw him into it. But before we had him covered a sudden summer rain came up and we sought shelter. It was a drenching rain; when it was over, a couple of hours later, we returned to Mr. Hoskins to find the hole filled with water and him flopping around in it. He was evidently feeling quite chipper, and was contentedly eating an angleworm.

We put him back in his boiler.* And then we began to experiment with Mr. Hoskins. If he could live out of water for two or three hours, why not for a whole day? Every morning we took him from his boiler at a certain time, and each day we kept him from the water ten minutes or so longer than the day preceding. By September he was able to go from seven in the morning until eight in the evening entirely out of water without suffering any apparent ill effects except a slight loss in weight. At first during the hours when he was

* The star marks the exact spot at which the more sceptical sort of person will likely cease to believe.

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks

out of water he would seem rather torpid, in fact almost comatose. But by giving him frequent cool drinks from a bottle with a quill in it we found that he became livelier. By autumn he could go until sunset on not more than two drinks of water.

He became a jollier companion, joining, so far as he was able, ourself and the other animals in all our sports. One of the most pleasant recollections of our boyhood is the memory of Mr. Hoskins flopping genially about the garden while Gustavus Adolphus and the other dog dug angleworms for Mr. Hoskins and the crow.

When the chilly weather came in November we moved his wash boiler into the house and set it behind the kitchen range, as we did not care to run the risk of having him frozen. But with the cold weather his need for water grew less and less; he began to manifest something like pride in his ability to do without it; it was in January that he began to experience, or at least to affect, a repugnance toward being in water at all. Then we substituted for the boiler

a box full of sawdust. Still, however, even during January he would sometimes awake during the night and cry for a drink, and we insisted on a weekly bath.

At seven o'clock on the morning of St. Valentine's Day, 1890, we went into the kitchen and found that Mr. Hoskins had leaped from the floor to the hearth of the kitchen range, and had succeeded in working himself in among the warm ashes. He had felt cold during the night. After that we always put him to bed with a hot water bottle, and we remember well his cries of peevishness and discomfort on the night when the stopper came out of the bottle and drenched him.

We linger over these last days of February, hesitating to go on, because they were the last days in Mr. Hoskins's life. It was on February 28 that he went out of doors for the first time that year. Some one had left the cistern uncovered and he fell in. We heard his cries. We put a ladder down and plucked him from the black water. But it was too late. If he had only remembered how to swim, if we had

Preface to a Book of Fishhooks

only had the presence of mind to fling down a plank to him he might have kept himself afloat until we reached him with the ladder. But it was too late. We suppose that when he felt himself in the water a panic struck him. Those were days before every family had a pulmotor. We worked over him, but it was no use. It is silly perhaps to feel so badly over a little animal like that, but from that day to this we have never eaten a bullhead.

*Preface to a Book of Cigarette
Papers*



Preface to a Book of Cigarette Papers X

ONE of our youthful ambitions was to be able to sit astride a horse, governing his action with one hand while with the other we nonchalantly rolled a cigarette. We have never known but two people who could do it. One of them was employed by a show, and we always suspected that there was an understanding, a gentlemen's agreement, between the horse and him; perhaps he bribed the animal outright. The other was a genuine cowboy who had gone to the real West from the little middle western country town where we lived more than thirty years ago and who liked to come back "East" for a few weeks every two or three years and ex-

Prefaces

hibit tricks of the sort before an admiring crowd of former friends and neighbors. His name was Buck Something-or-Other.

No doubt among his fellow range riders a few hundred miles to the west Buck was commonplace enough, but to our tame Illinois village, where nothing ever happened, Buck was a figure of romance. He was a being from another world, a link between the paper covered novels which we read and real life. Perhaps he knew it and enjoyed being just that; he was a picturesque and facile liar; likely he read the paper-covered novels too and was consciously striving to suggest their heroes—a thing he could get away with much more readily in Illinois than in the West, we suppose.

At any rate it was from Buck that we gained our original impression that there was something rather elegant and dashing and picturesque and knowing about the cigarette. We never did learn to roll them with one hand, either on a horse or off of one; to this day it is all we can do to roll one that will hang together, seated securely in an armchair and us-

Preface to a Book of Cigarette Papers

ing all our fingers and thumbs, and we have more thumbs than any one else we know when it comes to a business of that sort.

The mind of youth is "wax to receive and marble to retain," as a friend of ours once quoted while observing a family of six children, all below the age of ten, being dragged through the horror chamber of the Eden Musée. And there still dwells within us the feeling that the rolled cigarette belongs of right to such interesting creatures as adventurers and revolutionists and poets.

We had been a worshiper of Stevenson for some time before we learned that he was addicted to them, and when we learned it the circumstance naturally confirmed our feeling. Personally we do not enjoy smoking them; we do not get any physical satisfaction out of them; this is due, no doubt, to the fact that we learned to smoke a corncob pipe crammed with the very rankest and blackest tobacco at an early age, and no cigarette means anything to us unless we chew it as a goat or a deer chews them.

But it is the grosser and more material side

Prefaces

of our nature which finds the cigarette too feeble and pallid; all that is romantic and literary and spiritual in us holds by the cigarette. When we die and are purged of all the heavy flesh that holds us down, our soul, we hope, will roll and smoke cigarettes along with Buck the Romantic and lying cowboy and Ariel and Stevenson and Benvenuto Cellini and Jack Hamlin. We have never been the person on earth we should like to be; circumstances have always tied us to the staid and commonplace and respectable; but when we become an angel we hope to be right devilish at times. And that is an idea that some one should work out—Hell as a place of reward for Purtians. But it is possible that that elderly Mephistopheles, with the smack of a canting Calvinistic archangel about him, Bernard Shaw, has already done so somewhere.

Where the idea that the cigarette is more injurious than tobacco taken in any other form originated we cannot imagine. It seems to us, looking back and looking round on all the smokers we have known and know, to be grotesquely untrue. But we believed it firmly in

Preface to a Book of Cigarette Papers

our youth; it added a spice of deviltry to the idea of cigarette smoking which made it ten times more attractive. We dare say that scores of thousands, and perhaps millions, of American boys have taken to cigarette smoking simply because they thought it more reckless than smoking cigars or pipes. The moralists managed to invest it for them with a mysterious tradition of depravity; and so, quite naturally, having arrived at a certain age, they took to it enthusiastically. It has probably been a good thing for them; it has kept them away from too much pipe and cigar smoking. If we had been encouraged by some farsighted elder relation to take to cigarettes at the age of ten we should not be the physically ruinous thing, the anemic, pipe-shattered wreck, that we are to-day. But, as we have said, the mild things give us no sensation unless we eat them; and now it is too late for us to reform and take them up.

*Preface to the Plays of
Euripides*



Preface to the Plays of Euripides

WE approach a preface to the plays of Euripides with more confidence than we could summon to the critical consideration of any other Greek dramatist. We know more about Euripides. We have read more of him. We once read five lines of him in the original Greek. It is true that we did not know what they were about when we read them, and should not know now; but we read them thirty or forty times and something about the manner in which we read them saved a man's life.

We were fussing around the office of the Atlanta (Ga.) *Journal* one morning about three o'clock, having just finished writing an editorial which we thought would likely elect Hoke

Prefaces

Smith governor, if he were able to live up to it, when we ran across a copy of "Iphigenia in Tauris." It was a new edition, and some trusting publisher had sent it along in the vain hope that it would be noticed. We happened to know the alphabet and could mispronounce a few words, and we turned over the pages wishing that we were able to read the thing—it might give us a chance to elevate our mind, which was suffering from the frightful strain of writing about Hoke Smith in such a way that even Hoke would believe himself a statesman. And thinking how great a man Euripides probably was, for all we knew, and how superior to Hoke Smith he must have been in many ways, we got very hungry.

We went across the street to a little basement lunchroom kept by a fellow named George Stefanopoulos, who always put so much onion in his Hamburger steaks one could not taste the beef. If one poured enough Worcestershire sauce over them so that one could not taste the onions they could be eaten. We carried Euripides with us, and George told us proudly that

Preface to the Plays of Euripides

there is no more difference between the Greek of Euripides and the Greek written and spoken in Athens to-day than between the English of Shakespeare's time and the English of to-day. Inquiry revealed that George's knowledge of Shakespeare was about as extensive as our knowledge of Euripides, and so we cannot vouch for his statement.

Interrupting our course in Euripides—some one or some thing has been interrupting us all our life every time we seemed to be on the point of really getting into the classics—in came a young man named Henry.

Henry roomed with us, and roamed with us at that time, and he was a chronic sufferer from false *angina pectoris*. This is a disease (unknown to Euripides, but Alcibiades undoubtedly developed it) which has all the effects upon patient and observer of real organic affection of the heart; no one takes it lightly but the doctors. In Henry's case it was aggravated by a fondness for Georgia corn whisky and stuff he ate out of tin cans. This diet did things to his stomach; his stomach kicked to his pneumo-

Prefaces

gastric nerve, and his pneumogastric nerve gripped his heart as with iron claws, squeezed it to the size of a peanut, twisted it like a fountain pen that won't unscrew and convinced it that it would never beat again. The chief difference between real angina and pseudo angina (as far as we can gather from Euripides) is that while both can kill you, the real sort kills you more quickly and kindly.

Henry pulled a spasm of it while George was telling us about Euripides; writhed about, and fell to the floor semi-conscious.

Heat, applied to the heart, and strychnine or aromatic ammonia, if you can get hold of them, are (as *Æsculapius* would say) "indicated."

So we sent George's assistant to telephone for a doctor and applied a hot Hamburger steak, just out of George's frying pan, to Henry's bosom.

We had frequently helped Henry die with his heart, but this time we were alarmed.

"George," said we, "throw another Hamburger steak into the skillet at once. His pulse

Preface to the Plays of Euripides

has stopped entirely. And this steak is cooling."

Just then Henry's eyes fluttered and he strove to speak. We bent over the sufferer.

"I'm dying," murmured Henry. "Pray! Pray for me!"

The request caught us unaware; we could not remember any formal petition. In desperation we took up Euripides, and, as the second Hamburger steak went hot and sizzling and dripping with grease from George's frying-pan to Henry's heart, we began to chant one of the choruses.

There was something about a *Basileon* in it, whatever a *Basileon* may be . . .

"Thank you!" muttered Henry . . .

The third steak was getting cool, and still George's assistant did not return with a doctor. Henry's chest was cooling, too. His feet and hands were cold. He had no more pulse than a wooden Indian or one of the iron dogs in Hoke Smith's front yard. If we had known a real prayer we would have switched to it from *Basileon* . . .

And just as we were putting *Basileon* over the jumps for the eighteenth time George Stefano-poulous announced:

“Sir, I have no more Hamburger steak to fry!”

“My God!” said we, “*Basileon—Basileon*—dig up something else—*Basileon—Basileon*—fry an egg, George—*Basileon—Basileon*—and be quick about it! Fry two eggs!”

It was at the sixteenth egg that the physician arrived and complimented us on our treatment.

“Heat,” he said, “is the great thing in these cases, and it is well to remove all apprehension from the patient’s mind if possible.” “The prayer,” said Henry, who had been hypodermicked into something like an appetite for corn whisky and tin cans again, “the prayer is what saved me!”

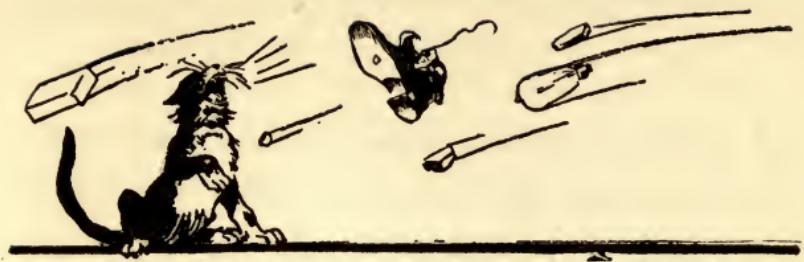
Euripides did not live as long as Sophocles, but was, on the whole, more widely popular. And one has only to compare the “Iphigenia” of Euripides with the “Agamemnon” of Æschylus to see their entire dissimilarity. They are products of practically the same period of

Preface to the Plays of Euripides

Hellenic culture . . . and yet, what a difference!

Henry married, Hoke Smith in the Senate,
Euripides dead—how time flies!

*Preface to a Cat Show
Catalogue*



Preface to a Cat Show Catalogue Y

THE feline animals described and pictured in this catalog are, doubtless, the aristocrats of their species. But I know a yellow cat, lean and wicked, and with the voice of a lost soul crying out its woes across some black abyss of nether night, who could whip any dozen of them. He has the courage of Ajax.

For years I have been more or less bothered by the summer cat. He comes—he and she come—in earnest couples, in tragic trios, to stage desperate operas of war and love beneath my chamber window. I have flung old boots, electric light bulbs, Christmas presents, and corncob pipes at them, without effect. Sixteen volumes of the works of the English poets, full of typographical errors and notes by pedantic gentlemen kindly interpreting the poets' mean-

Prefaces

ings better than they could themselves, went after the boots and pipes, but the felines always returned. Once I thought I had permanently discouraged one with Wordsworth's "Excursion," but he was back in forty-eight hours; he had only been hit by the book—he could not read it.

About three months ago I had what I thought was a great idea. I bought an electric pocket-flasher, such as are carried by watchmen and stage burglars and the detectives created by popular illustrators of magazine stories. The next time the alley orchestra tuned up I flashed the light out of my window upon the musicians. They couldn't stand it. Cat after cat would catch it in his eyes, try to stare it down for a couple of minutes, and then suddenly turn and slink off. They love the darkness, for their ways are evil.

But about three weeks ago the yellow demon mentioned above made his entrance into the alley, and as he came he sang. He is a cat with a bitter melancholia, with a profound, pessimistic sense of the uselessness of existence; and his

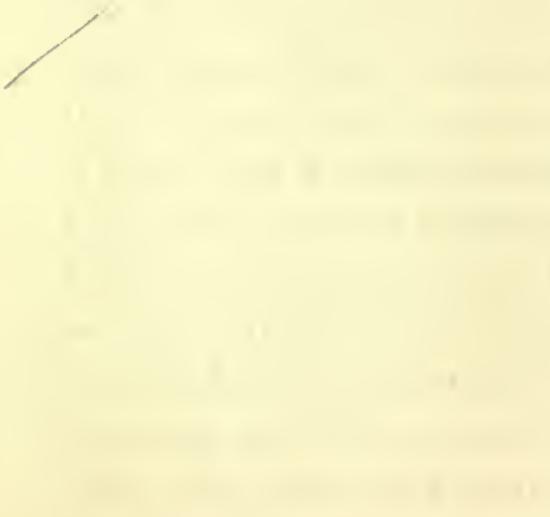
Preface to a Cat Show Catalogue

hatred of the cosmos which he is forced to inhabit is the motive of his song; he is a cat with a strong, black, bad, unbroken heart, who loathes life.

I gave him the flash in his eyes, and he stopped singing, startled. But did he run? Not he. He squatted and flattened his ears, and swished his tail. I moved the spot-light a couple of feet away from him; he studied it, and then he suddenly sprang at it, hissing and clawing; he arched his back and fought it as I made it dance about the court; he rushed it; he boxed it with his wicked claws extended; he snarled and fell back, baffled; but he always came on again. I got tired before he did, and went to bed and left him victorious. He was back two nights later, and fought the light again; he has been back four or five times. To him that ray of light, menacing him and leaping about him, is not only an enemy, but an enemy whose hostility must be inexplicable; it must shoot down into the blackness at him like a malign miracle. But his heart is stout. Whether the phenomenon is human or feline or demoniac,

Prefaces

he is not to be daunted; he has the courage of Ajax. If he weighed fifty pounds instead of ten, he would decimate New York City—the Tammany policemen would not touch him, out of respect for the species—and become as much of a hero as one of America's popular murderers.



*Preface to the Prospectus of
a Club*



Preface to the Prospectus of a Club

BROOKLYN is getting to be a devil of a place. They are organizing a club over there, and the name of it is to be *La Bohème* . . . just like that: *La Bohème*! With one of those rakish, foreign looking accents over the È. One of those sassy accents that make you think of Trilby and the Latin Quarter and . . . and . . . oh, you know! All that sort of thing!

They have been having oyster fights at the church parsonages and elocutionary teas at the Pouch Gallery and hearing it hinted that they are staid and conservative, long enough, and now they are going to show they have some *vie* over there, if you get what we mean. Greenwich Village isn't the only place in Greater New York that can get away with this *vie* stuff. There has always been plenty of *vie* in Brook-

Prefaces

lyn, but people in Manhattan and the Bronx have pretended not to believe it.

People in Greenwich Village wouldn't act as if they owned all the *esprit* and *verve* and *vie* in the five boroughs if they only knew more about Brooklyn.

Walt Whitman used to live over there and edit the *Eagle* and go swimming in Buttertermilk Channel, two points off the starboard bow of Hank Beecher's church. Once an old Long Island skipper sunk a harpoon into Walt's haunch when he came up to blow, and the poet, snorting and bellowing and spouting verse, towed the whaler and his vessel clear out to Montauk before he shook the iron loose. Is there a bard in Greenwich Village that could do that? Not even Jack Reed, who writes like Byron and swims like Leander, could do that.

Walt was a Brooklynite; Ben De Casseres was born there; Newell Hillis and Jim Huneker and Laura Jean Libbey live there now, and we moved away ourself only a few months ago. And now that the *vie* over there is getting more organized, and more Bohème-like, so to speak,

Preface to the Prospectus of a Club

we're going to move back when our present lease runs out.

There have always been *literati* and *vie* in Brooklyn, if you know where to look for them. Ed Markham is going over there and recite "The Man with the Hoe" when this La Bohème Club opens up, out on Washington avenue, half-way between the Pouch Gallery and the place where the Battle of Long Island was fought. And speaking of the Battle of Long Island, Mr. Higgins, the ink manufacturer, once offered a prize for the best piece of poetry about the Battle of Long Island, which gave quite an impetus to the efforts of all of us younger Brooklyn *literati*. The winning poem wasn't written in his brand of ink at all, but he was game and paid the prize just the same. If Mr. Higgins isn't asked to join this new La Bohème Club it will be a darned shame.

Mr. Eugene V. Brewster—undoubtedly Eugene Vie Brewster—who is considerable *litterateur* himself, a patron of all the arts, and quite an authority on Bohème, both here and abroad, we understand, is starting this new La Bohème

Prefaces

Club; and his own house on Washington avenue is to be the clubhouse. There's nothing of the short sport about Eugene Vie Brewster! To give you some idea, we quote Rule 5 of the House Rules from the prospectus:

The freedom of the whole house is conceded to all guests and is desired by the host and hostess. The books in the library, the engravings in the dining room, the paintings in the salon, the photos in the hall, the pen and inks in the den, the piano, the pianola, the harp, the guitar, the curios, the portfolios—everything—are to be freely utilized. Please don't all congregate in one corner of one room.

There's nothing takes the *vie* out of a Bohème party like everybody bunching together in one corner, or sitting around the walls not saying anything. They used to do that at spelling-bees back home when we were a kid, before the spelling actually started; and Julius Chambers, in his department in the Brooklyn *Eagle*, mentioned that he noticed a tendency toward the same thing at Windsor Palace when Queen Victoria was presented to him. E. Vie Brewster is right to speak out plainly and firmly about that corner stuff at the start.

Preface to the Prospectus of a Club

We might as well give all the rest of the rules while we are about it:

This organization shall have only one officer, a vice-president. It shall meet every now and then, but usually on Sunday, from five to eleven. There shall be no dues, no elections, no formalities, and no business. It shall have no constitution nor by-laws. Membership shall consist of attendance. Any person may call a meeting at any time or place and all may attend who are invited. Any person is eligible who can do something, or who has done something, in science, arms, letters or any of the arts. Members may dress as they please, but semi-formal dress is preferred. Every person attending must expect to be called upon at any meeting, without notice, to do his or her bit, and to do it—if convenient. Hence, please come prepared. The purpose of this organization shall be to promote social intercourse; to bring together agreeable people of talent; to encourage social, political, domestic and national economy; to give receptions to distinguished people; to exchange ideas, sift them and make public the best ones; lastly, but not leastly, to encourage early hours—early hours for retiring and rising, and hence early hours for beginning and ending all evening entertainments. . . . The ladies may remove their wraps, second floor rear; gentlemen, second floor front. . . . Buffet supper served in the dining room at seven. Help yourself. After the entertainment, or between numbers, late comers may go below and partake of what's left. Smoking material and some mild fluids for the gentlemen in the “den”—second floor front. Smoking is also endured in the library after eight, but not elsewhere. . . . Every guest is required to “register” in one or more

Prefaces

of the albums in the library—and to write something besides a mere name. There will be a clock in every room. Curfew shall not ring, but eleven o'clock is late enough. We should all be in bed by twelve.—Eugene V. Brewster, Vice-President, *pro tem.*

Eleven o'clock is late enough, wild spirits though we be! Some of us have to go all the way to Pineapple street, through the hurly-burly of Brooklyn's night life, of a Sunday evening when the churches are letting out, so let us take our wraps from the second floor, rear and front, put them over our semi-formal dress, write our *mot* in the album and sally forth . . . these are mad nights, these nights in Brooklyn's Bohemia, but we must not overdo them!

But let us not be overly careful as we pass Borough Hall . . . let us be jovial, and chant whimsically as we go, with a wicked thought that it will be twelve by the clock on the Eagle Building before we retire, a stanza or two from "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night!" And, as that Bohemian, F. P. A., used to say, "so home and to bed."

William Marion Reedy, we understand, is

Preface to the Prospectus of a Club

to come all the way from St. Louis to Brooklyn to recite the entire poem, "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night," for this new *La Bohème* Club some evening.

Ah, this is the *vie!*

*Preface to a Medium's Dope
Book*





Preface to a Medium's Dope Book X

THIS volume was put into our hands by a professional spiritualistic medium who felt that a change of scene was, temporarily at least, to his advantage. He left town hurriedly. There was a train wreck, and he "passed over."

We have tried many times since to get into communication with him for the purpose of asking him what to do with the book, but without success. One would think that a medium's ghost might find it easier to get a message across than any other sort of spirit. But Mr. Pedder had nothing to add after death to the volume which he so laboriously compiled during life.

There are in the book explicit directions for producing nearly every phenomenon known to psychical research, and there is a list of places

Prefaces

and persons from which and from whom the latest tricks and apparatus may be purchased. Materialization was nothing to Mr. Pedder (until he died, that is).

There is a catalog of some twelve thousand citizens of various American communities who believe in spirit communication, with a longer or shorter entry after each name. From this catalog one may glean such information as this: "Mr. and Mrs. Henry Blank, No. — Rosalie Court, Chicago; well-to-do retired haberdasher; son, Albert, entered spirit life August 18, 1901, aged 21; daughter, Martha, passed over Jan. 10, 1904, aged 19, on eve of marriage. Albert, student Chicago university; was taking course in philosophy; has met Plato, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius in spirit life, etc."

Pedder, before he passed over himself, told us how such information was collected by mediums and passed from one to another. A medium entering a community a stranger—and dealing with people "about whom it was absolutely impossible he could know anything at all"

Preface to a Medium's Dope Book

—knows a great deal, thanks to his dope book.

More interesting, to us, was Pedder himself. For, in spite of knowing all the tricks of the trade, he was the most credulous mortal we ever met. Pedder would go to séances, not primarily to admire the technique of some professional brother or sister, but with the ever-recurrent hope of seeing something inexplicable by any hypothesis of trickery.

“Gee!” he would say to us after such an experience. “I thought for a minute last night I was up against the real thing!”

“Well?” we would ask.

“It wasn’t,” Pedder would say sadly. “Just a smooth worker. I watched him close, hoping all the time it was straight goods, but finally I got hep to how he done it.” Pedder was not always grammatical.

“I can do it myself with a little practice,” Pedder would say with a sigh. “Listen—here’s what he done—and it’s a peach, too . . .” and Pedder would proceed to demonstrate and explain.

Once he delivered himself to this effect:

Prefaces

"There's *gotta* be spirits! I was talkin' to Eddie Slicker last week. You know who Eddie is, don't you? Smoothest worker in the business. 'Eddie,' I says, 'do you *always* fake it?' 'Tom,' he says, 'so help me, there's times when I don't know whether I'm fakin' it or not.' 'Eddie,' I says, 'don't bull *me*!' 'Tom,' he says, 'I wouldn't. But so help me, Tom, there's been more'n once when these dam' skeptics had me in a corner that *something helped me out of the hole!* Tom,' he says, 'there's *gotta* be ghosts!' 'Eddie,' I says, 'the same thing has happened to me!'"

"But has it?" we asked.

"No," he admitted. "I was just bulling Eddie. But is that any sign Eddie was bulling me?"

And then, after much deep thought:

"Where there's a demand there's gotta be a supply. Ain't that logical, huh? If there wasn't any ghosts how would people get the notion of askin' for 'em in the first place? What? Look at all these scientists—all these psychical researchers. Do you mean to tell me

Preface to a Medium's 'Dope' Book

all those educated men are bein' fooled? Not on your life! There's *gotta* be spirits!"

"But you've fooled some of the scientists yourself," we reminded him.

"What does that prove?" he answered us indignantly. "Just because I put across a phony check, is that a sign there's no good checks? Not on your life! The trouble with you skeptics is that you can't believe nothing!"

It *is* the trouble with skeptics; but it always made poor Pedder very downcast when we reminded him that we had actually been on the road to belief when we had met him and he had in his vanity shown us his box of tricks.

"I don't deny," he would say, "that I have been a stumbling block to *you*. But think of all the others in the world I've made believers of! I've given a lot of satisfaction to a lot o' people, I tell you! I been led to it—led by an occult power to do the good I've done! I tell you, there's *gotta* be spirits!"

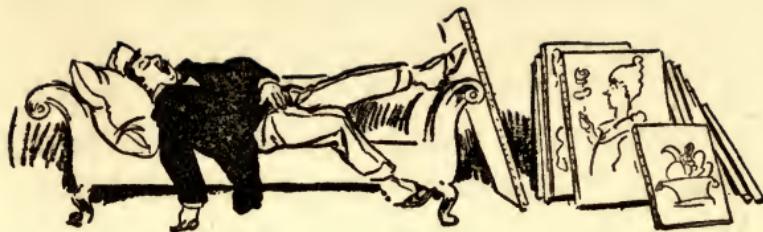
But Pedder's ghost, in spite of an agreement that the one who died first would appear to the other, has never come back to look for his

Prefaces

book. Probably the conditions are not right. We publish the book in a last effort to hear from the author.

It is the sort of monument Pedder would hate; anything his ghost can compass to prevent its issue that ghost will not fail to attempt.

*Preface to a Treatise on a
New Art*



Preface to a Treatise on a New Art V

UNCLE Peleg Higglesworth never suspected that he was to become the basis of a New Art, which was, moreover, destined to perish with the passing of his spirit. When he came on from Illinois to pay a long visit to his nephew Jason and Jason's wife, who lived in Greenwich Village and were painters, it was not because he was interested in any sort of art whatever . . . he had determined to collect a good time in advance on the money which he had planned to leave Jason.

When Uncle Peleg arrived it was late at night, and he was put to bed on a couch in an alcove of the studio apartment which the younger Higglesworths inhabited. Ten minutes after he had retired Jason and Mrs. Jason leapt from their bed, clasped each other in a

wild alarm and stood trembling and interrogating each other with terror-stricken eyes.

"It is the Sixth Avenue elevated," murmured Jason, after a moment. "A train has left the track and is crashing through the Jefferson Market building."

"No, Jason, it is a bombardment," said his wife. "I hear the shrill cries of the dying women and children mingled with the scream of the shells. German U-boats have got into the North River and are battering down New York."

But it was neither. It was Uncle Peleg snoring. Uncle Peleg's snores could express many things, but there are no words that can express Uncle Peleg's snores.

Some snores and snorers one may get used to, but Uncle Peleg snored in many moods; he was versatile and various in his snoring; sailors never get so they enjoy hurricanes, and the dwellers on the flanks of Vesuvius take no delight in volcanic eruptions; and the winds of the Horn and the thunders of Vesuvius were both in Uncle Peleg's snore, but more than merely

Preface to a Treatise on a New Art

these was there. In its milder and gentler moods the snore was as if a thousand wildcats were rushing in waves of passion to battle against and die among a hundred moaning buzz saws. There was this in Uncle Peleg's snore, and there was more than this. A saint might walk through hell without suffering, protected by his holiness; but if a devil were to walk through heaven he would become distressingly vocal with pain, and there would be what human beings could understand in the expression of his ultimate pathos and self pity . . . there would be a note that men could understand, but no waking man could reach or reproduce it. There was all this in Uncle Peleg's snore, and there was more.

In his waking hours, Uncle Peleg was quite like other retired bankers who have come on to New York to visit their relations and enjoy life for a while before they settle down to die. When he was spoken to about his snoring, he would say, incredulously: "Snore? Snore? You think I snore, do you? Shucks! More'n likely you hear yourself snoring." And

Prefaces

Jason Higglesworth and his wife would say no more . . . for, after all, were they not to inherit Uncle Peleg's money? And the old man saw to it that they had a good time while he stayed with them; he was liberal, and eager for amusement—although, when he occasionally fell asleep at a theater or the opera or in a restaurant, it took all the tact that Jason and his wife possessed to extricate themselves from the situation.

But one day Uncle Peleg suddenly announced that he had lost all his money. He had been meddling with the stock exchange. Gratitude for what he had done, gratitude for what he had intended to do, common decency, impelled the nephew and his wife to offer Uncle Peleg a home as long as he should live, for he had no other relations in the world and could no longer work.

His loss of money affected the old man strangely. With it he lost all interest in life, apparently, and he found it difficult to keep awake at all, day or night. Formerly his sleeping hours were no more than those of the av-

erage man, although he used them so differently; but now he would lapse into his terrible and devastating slumber at meals, or sitting in front of the fire in the afternoons, or while riding in a street car, or even while assisting with the housework, which became one of the old man's humble duties.

And always when he woke he would say: "Snore? Snore? People think I snore? Likely you snore yourself, Jason." But Jason and his wife could no longer work at painting pictures because of the old man's noise; and this was serious, for now they must live by painting pictures and support him, too.

They were obliged to take a smaller and cheaper studio, and this was terrible, for it brought them still nearer to Uncle Peleg, who now slept far more than he waked. But still sentiments of loyalty forbade Jason and his wife turning the old man out upon a startled and echoing world.

One day as Mrs. Jason and her husband paced up and down the studio and looked at the old man, who had been stricken with sleep

Prefaces

as he was wiping the breakfast dishes, and stood bending over the sink snoring out a battle piece that would have made Wagner envious, an idea came to Jason.

"My dear," he told his wife, "it has just occurred to me what Uncle Peleg's snores really are. When man sleeps his subconscious mind is in control and his ego ranges back through all the past life of the race . . . in Uncle Peleg's snores we hear the Cave Man fighting with the Boar, in Uncle Peleg's snores is the orchestral expression of the evolution of the human being.. Each snore represents a nightmare, and each nightmare is a drama and a dream of some struggle, fearful and fatal and beastly, that actually occurred away back in the dim dawn of time. The wandering ego of our Uncle Peleg comes downward from the days before man was really man, comes down from pre-Adamic times and sings its saga as it comes. I have an idea. . . ."

Jason's artistic problem was to control this vocal hobo soul of Uncle Peleg's in its expression. With cleverly devised pedals and levers

Preface to a Treatise on a New Art

and keys and stops, wrought into an instrument harnessed about the palpitating body of Uncle Peleg, with weights and wires so arranged that pressure upon the solar plexus, the medulla oblongata and various other nervous centers could be increased, decreased and regulated at will—Jason finally realized his plan.

He would sit for long hours at The Uncle Peleg practicing, until he could present a sound-drama of Pleistocene Man spearing a Dinosaur, or a tribe of nondescript arboreal half-simian creatures slaying a mastodon with fire-hardened sticks thrust into the creature's eyes, and then he hired one of the small Greenwich Village theaters and made his public appearance.

Hermione was there . . . "How primeval!" said Hermione.

It was a New Art.

Fame poured in upon the Higglesworths, and gold. But just as they had made arrangements to transfer The Uncle Peleg to one of the larger Broadway auditoriums, something happened . . . an overstrained membrane, perhaps, burst . . . who knows what? Any-

Prefaces

way, it was in the gloaming, and at home, as Uncle Peleg would have wished it to be.

“Snore? Snore? So you think I snore, do you? Snore yourself!” were the old man’s last words.

And he drifted out into the unknown on the wild blast and vibrant wind of one last long moaning snore that shook the Island of Manhattan from the Woolworth Building to Grant’s Tomb.

*Preface to a Memorandum
Book*





Preface to a Memorandum Book X

DARIUS, one of Persia's most enterprising kings and indefatigable publicists, became violently angry against the Athenians one day. They had helped certain Greeks resident in Asia Minor in a revolt against his authority. Therefore, Darius swore by the name of Ormazd and by the bones of Cambyses that he would smear Athens into a pasty reminiscence when he got around to it.

But the cares of kingship are many. Darius was so busy ruling his subjects and causing praises of himself to be chiseled upon the cliff of Behistun that whole days would go by when he would forget to execrate the Athenians. Darius was by nature a forgetful man. He would awaken at night with the plaguing sense of

Prefaces

something important left undone; he would lie tossing on his couch until the morning chariots began to rattle along the cobbled streets of Persepolis before he remembered that the thing he had omitted doing the day before was to hate the Athenians.

Things could not go on in this fashion. The Athenians were getting too much sleep and Darius too little. Some means must be found of reminding the king to be passionately angry at the Athenians every day. The magi were consulted. They advised that the office of Human Memorandum Book be created. It was done. A young man of good family was selected and invested with the salary, dignity, responsibility and apparel of the post. His name, we should say at a guess, was Marmaduke. At any rate, we think of him as Marmaduke. He dressed his hair in flat, oiled ringlets and wore gilded sandals.

Marmaduke, each day as the king drew back his chair after luncheon, would walk nobly into the great dining room of the palace at Susa, announced by shawms and trumpets and at-

Preface to a Memorandum Book

tended by slaves and pages, and cry, flinging up his hand gracefully and dramatically:

“Hail, King!”

“Hail, Marmaduke!” the king would reply.

“O King! Remember!” Marmaduke would proceed.

“O Marmaduke! Remember what?” the king would ask, and Marmaduke, signaling for another blare of shawms, would come three steps nearer and declaim, in a resonant tenor voice . . .

Somehow, we have a very strong sense of this Marmaduke's personality; he used a great deal of scent, and the fringes of his cape jingled as he walked; his eyes were of a hazel color and even in mid-gesture they would sometimes slide sidewise toward the queens drawn up in rows about the dining room waiting for Darius to finish eating so that they might begin; he was a connoisseur of fighting bulls and a patron of sculptors; he often affected to be bored when captives were strangled in the courtyard of an afternoon; he made little poems and had limited editions of them baked on cream-col-

Prefaces

ored bricks; he was proud of his archery and felt disgraced when he shot down a workman from a roof to please the ladies if his arrow had not pierced the fellow precisely through the eye; a merry, exquisite, gallant sort of chap was Marmaduke, with interests both esthetic and athletic . . .

Marmaduke would declaim, in his pleasant tenor voice:

“O King! Remember the Athenians!”

And then the king would remember them and would think of them with the most deadly indignation, and he would go cheerfully through the day and calmly through the night. . . . For a while all was well . . . for a while . . .

Darius, although he learned to remember the Athenians, with Marmaduke to help him, would often forget what particular thing it was he should remember about them. It was eight years before he went to war against them. . . . The forgetful man is doomed. . . . Darius, in the year 486 B. C., while engaged in fitting out his third expedition against Greece, suddenly forgot what he was fitting out the expedition

Preface to a Memorandum Book

for. None of the courtiers dared tell him unless he questioned them, for that would have shown superiority to the king; each day Marmaduke would tell him to remember the Athenians, but Marmaduke did not presume to tell him why they were to be remembered. Darius died, in the midst of the vast host he had assembled, of protracted insomnia. . . . In the long run, the forgetful man always fails. . . . Darius was a great king in his day. . . . Give him time enough, and the man who cannot remember will come to grief. . . . Where is that Darius now?

And yet, in looking over our own memorandum book, we cannot find it in our heart to be too hard on the constitutionally forgetful. There are, in our book, a hundred little scribbled notes and reminders. We know what some of them signify, in detail. And in a general way we know what they all represent. They stand for a couple of years of unredeemed promises on our part. They proceed from a wide, vague, random feeling of good nature; an ineffectual good nature, that never gets any-

where in particular, and is worthy of no respect because it is not a positive quality.

Or, at least, it began as a merely negative thing; though it may have acquired a positive force by this time. It began as an absence of active ill nature. It was our cue, being fat, to appear good-natured; the popular supposition that fat men are good-natured was too much for us; we were too indolent to struggle against it. It would have troubled us greatly to have acted as mean as we felt, on many occasions; we were too selfish to expend our vital energy in hating certain persons as much as our moral perception told us they should be hated. Our affectation of good-nature finally became genuine; and yet the good-nature is ineffectual.

It comes out of us at odd times in the desire to have the moment pass pleasantly. We hear some one telling of his hopes and disappointments and we are moved, and we say: "It sounds like a corking good idea; send your manuscript to us and we will take it to a publisher for you; we know a lot of publishers."

And he sends the manuscript, and after a

Preface to a Memorandum Book

long while he gets it back again, because we have not remembered to take it to a publisher, and because we don't know any of them well enough to bother them with the manuscript of other people, anyhow.

But, in the meantime, we have methodically made a note of it in the little book. And that and all the other notes in the little book torture us and even prevent us sleeping as much as we should between meals; the very sight of the little book brings on an agony of remorse. At times, when we feel ourself getting too cocky, we open the little book and look into it to mortify the spirit.

And yet, we do not mean to lie about these things. We say, "Yes; we will send you a copy of such and such a thing!" "Yes, we will get your brother a job!" "Yes, we will be glad to go to the dinner and make a little talk."

But at the time we are sincere. There is nothing we like to see so much as the gleam of pleasure in a person's eye when he feels that we have sympathized with him, understood him, interested ourself in his welfare. At these mo-

Prefaces

ments something fine and spiritual passes between two friends. These moments are the moments worth living.

And—it had not occurred to us before, but the reflection comes to us as we write—these spiritual emotions are too rare and precious to have anything so gross and physical as an actual deed follow them. It would coarsen and cheapen the communion if a more material service were tagged onto one of these divine interchanges of good will. It would insult our friend (or should insult him) to descend from the high, pure plane of golden promise to the toilsome level of performance; what he wants out of us (or what he should want) is not a job for his brother—he wants to stir our nature to a sympathetic understanding of his brother; he wants to strike from us a spark of generous disinterestedness. And it would be degrading to translate this heavenly mood into an earthly deed.

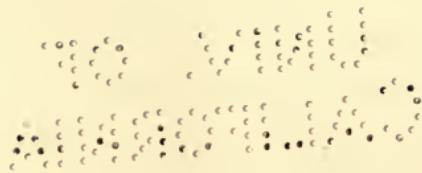
As we say, this explanation had not occurred to us until a couple of minutes ago. And now that we have thought of it we shall be able to

Preface to a Memorandum Book

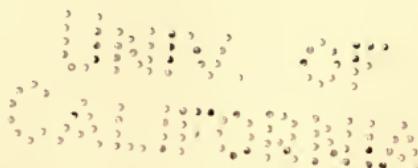
look at the little book hereafter with less of remorse; perhaps we will soon begin to cherish it as an evidence of our superiority.

We donate the explanation to such of our readers as have similar little books on their consciences.

LIBRARY
STATE
CALIFORNIA



*Preface to a Hangman's
Diary*





Preface to a Hangman's Diary X

THE Hangman whose observations are introduced by these remarks was for many years a deputy sheriff in a certain county where hangings were of frequent occurrence; no matter who was sheriff he was the sheriff's chief assistant and did the hanging.

He had a strong notion of the dignity of his vocation; and he was an artist, with the artist's peculiar vanities and sensibilities. When execution by means of the electric current was adopted in his state he hanged himself in the courtyard of the jail where he had hanged so many others, and did it quite beautifully.

He did not care to survive the old order; the world would never wear quite the same face to him again, and so, he left it. This was sentimentality, no doubt; and yet it was a senti-

mentality sincerely felt and resolutely acted upon; a sentimentality that we find lovely. Too many of us are so cowardly that we linger on quite uselessly after our enthusiasms have departed; but he adjusted the rope about his own neck and his leaden heart pulled him swiftly downward through the trap.

This Hangman—Henk was his name, Obadiah Henk, and he came of good, old, God-fearing Puritan stock—made a practice of getting on good terms with the men whom he was to hang during their last weeks in jail. He used to say that he had never hanged a stranger; all his clients were his friends; he tried to put a personal touch into his work; the careless, slipshod disposition of so many modern artisans who make no effort to cater to diversities of individual taste was not his; he liked each man who passed through his hands to feel that he had made a conscientious study of that man's particular case. Henk and his "customers," as he used to call them, always grew very fond of each other before they parted.

Henk had a pleasing way of carrying delica-

Preface to a Hangman's Diary

cies to those who were later to claim his professional services, especially if they were thin. He hated to hang a very thin man or a very fat man; the ideal weight, he used to say, was exactly one hundred and sixty-nine pounds, and he urged his friends to make that weight, wherever possible, against the great day.

From his many conversations with his friends Henk gradually pieced together a theory as to what it is that sends men to the gallows.

He presents it elaborately in his diary; briefly, his conviction may be stated thus: It is the mothers of the race who are its menace. Out of two hundred and eighty-seven men who told him the stories of their lives, Henk could trace the downfall of no less than two hundred and sixty-nine directly to their mothers. These (on the whole) well-meaning females had coddled their boys from the cradle, had implanted in each boy the idea that he belonged in a special category of humanity, and was therefore licensed to consider himself superior to the ordinary communal restrictions. The undisciplined selfishness thus fostered in the nature of the boy,

in combination with a will made weak and violent by early indulgence, infallibly got him into trouble when he came into contact with the world.

“The world’s greatest evil,” Henk writes on page 57 of his diary, “is mother love, and the race will not make any real progress until it has been abolished.” Before women are allowed to become mothers, he argues, they should be specifically and painstakingly trained for the task, for after they have achieved maternity the encradled race is at their mercy.

The Spartan method of removing the boy from maternal jurisdiction at an early age did not appeal to Henk. His dictum was, make the mother train the child, but make her train him right. He seemed to think that the only way to have women trained to train boys right is for men to train the women. There is a flaw in every system, there is a point at which each philosophy ceases to advance and begins to run round in a circle like a kitten chasing its tail; Henk fails to explain how men, who have already been given a wrong bias in infancy by

Preface to a Hangman's Diary

women, are to overcome that bias sufficiently to teach their daughters how to teach their grandchildren.

But one does not need to endorse Henk in everything in order to recognize that his occupation gave him a vantage point of peculiar value from which to con the human race. Perhaps he fell into the error of considering all men too narrowly, of looking at them too exclusively in relation to his own profession; but that is a fault common to all thinkers who take a keen and loving interest in their work.

And Henk, at that, never became a mere vulgar faddist. It is true that he might remark to an acquaintance on the street, after a lingering appraisal, "Henry, you're getting fat; be careful, Henry; you've passed good hanging weight!"

But, on the other hand, he had been known to say that he enjoyed a good glass of beer, or a good day's fishing, or a good dog fight, or what not, almost as much as hanging a man.

With his pleasant theories and his little attentions to those to whom he was finally to

Prefaces

minister, and his pride in his art, and his agreeable sentimentality, Henk's personality is an appealing one; and our regret is that we can only indicate the character of his diary so briefly instead of presenting it.

*Preface to a Volume of
Poetry*



Preface to a Volume of Poetry X

WE have often been asked to read the poems in the following collection at teas and similar soul and culture fights. We have always refused. It is not, as some of our friends believe, because of any excess of timidity that we consistently refuse.

It is because no one wants to pay us what it is worth to us. We are perfectly willing, if we get enough money for it, to read poems at Teas, Dinners, Pugilistic Contests, Clam-bakes, Football Games, Prayer Meetings of Any Denomination, Clinics, Divorce Trials, Balls, Dedications, Lynchings, Launchings, Luncheons, Weddings, Jail Deliveries, Tonsil Removals, Ice Cream Socials, Legal Executions, Wrestling Matches, Tooth Pullings, Commencement Exercises, Operations for Appendicitis, Coming

Prefaces

Out Parties, Taffy Pulls, Better Baby Contests, Dog Shows, Gambling House Raids, Sunday School Picnics, Pool Tournaments, Spelling Bees, Adenoid Unveilings, Murders, Church Suppers and Cremations. But money we must have.

For while reading one's own poems to a gang of strangers need not, of course, be absolutely degrading, yet it is bound to be a silly sort of performance.

And it is worth money. Poetry, with us, is a business; it takes time, muscular effort, nervous energy and, sometimes, thought, to produce a poem.

People do not ask painters to go to places and paint pictures for nothing, but they are forever trying to graft entertainment off of poets.

Our rates, henceforth, are as follows:

For reading small, blond, romantic poems, thirty-five dollars per poem. Blond, dove-colored or pink lyrics prominently featuring the Soul, thirty-five dollars each.

Humorous poems, not really very funny, twenty-five dollars each.

Preface to a Volume of Poetry

Humorous poems, with slightly sentimental flavor, forty dollars each.

Humorous poems, really quite funny, seventy-five dollars each.

Dialect poems mentioning persons called "Bill," "Jim," "Si," etc., Southern dialect, fifty dollars each; middle Western, fifty-five dollars.

Pathetic dialect verse charged for according to the quantity and quality of pathos desired. (See rates on Mother and Old Sweetheart poems.)

Sonnets, ten dollars each. Not less than five sonnets served with any one order.

Pash poems, one hundred dollars each. Pash poems, however, will only be read from the interior of a heavy wire cage.

Free verse, any kind, one dollar a line.

No matter how long or how short the lines actually are, for business purposes a line of free verse is to be considered as containing seven words.

Serious poems, melancholy tone, fifty dollars each.

For ten dollars additional persons not to ex-

ceed twelve in number will be permitted to file by and feel the poet's heart beat after reading sad poems; persons in excess of twelve in number charged for at the rate of two dollars each.

Serious poems, optimistic in nature, fifty dollars each.

Old Sweetheart poems, in which she dies, one hundred dollars each. Old Folks at Home poems, sad, fifty dollars each; each reference to angels five dollars additional; father killed, mother left living, sixty-five dollars; both parents killed, seventy-five dollars; with dialect, one hundred dollars. Both parents killed during Christmas holidays, any dialect wanted, angels, toys, etc., two hundred dollars. Auditors' tears guaranteed, and for thirty-five dollars additional poet also will cry while reading this old reliable line of family poetry.

Religious poems, not more than five stanzas, one hundred dollars each.

Agnostic poems, latest cut, one hundred thirty-five to one hundred seventy-five dollars each.

These agnostic goods are for very exclusive

Preface to a Volume of Poetry

circles, as are our radical and anarchistic poems, which come at two hundred dollars each.

Tame revolutionary poems, usual Greenwich Village sort of thing, fifty dollars each; if read in Flatbush, sixty-five dollars each.

Really quite shocking revolutionary poems, two hundred dollars each. A very modern line of goods.

Write for special combination offers and rates on limericks. We have limericks listed in three categories:

Limericks Where Ladies Are Present.

Limericks Where Ladies Are Absent but Clergymen Are Present

Limericks. *or - ale*

In the event that we are expected to Be Nice and Meet People, 20 per cent. added to above rates.

If expected to Meet People, and Being Nice is left optional with us, only 5 per cent. added to above rates.

Conversation on poetry or related topics charged for at rate of \$75 an hour in addition to reading charges.

Prefaces

Conversation on Rabindranath Tagore: Listened To, \$750 an hour. Participated In, \$1,000 the first hour and \$350 for every additional ten minutes thereafter.

Limericks composed on spot (discreet) twenty-five dollars each. Impromptu couplets, good, twenty dollars each; medium, twelve dollars and fifty cents each; quite bad impromptu couplets, five dollars each.

Poetry written by host, hostess or any guest, listened to at rate of one hundred dollars per quarter hour.

Compliments on same to author, ten dollars each additional.

Compliments spoken so as to be overheard by more than eight persons, twenty dollars each.

Compliments dashed off in little informal notes, forty dollars each if notes are initialed, one hundred dollars each if notes are signed with full name.

For pretending to like Amy Lowell's work our rate is \$1,000 an hour or any fraction thereof.

No orders filled amounting to less than two

Preface to a Volume of Poetry

hundred dollars for ninety minutes' work. Certified check must be mailed with orders.

Prices quoted are f. o. b. Pennsylvania Station, N. Y. City.

Patrons will always confer a favor by reporting any inattention on the part of the audience.

*Preface to Old Doctor
Gumph's Almanac*



Preface to Old Doctor Gumph's Almanac

THIS Almanac, from the picture of the partially flayed gentleman in the front to the final advertisement for Old Doctor Gumph's Wonder Oil for Man and Beast, on the back cover, is a work of joy and mystery and fascination; it leads the believing mind along paths that skirt forever the boundary between the known and apparent world and the glad realms of poetry and conjecture.

There is something magical on every page of it.

Doctor Gumph's Wonder Oil is almost a miracle by itself.

It is marvelous that the abdominal cavity of the partly peeled gentleman aforesaid should have such an effect upon the constellations—or perhaps it is the constellations that affect him.

Prefaces

It is wonderful that any one should know whether it is going to rain or snow on April 27, but Doctor Gumph knows and tells. It is incredible that the moon should have been weighed, but its weight is printed on page 27, between Mother Shipton's Prophecy and a recipe for preserving watermelon rind.

Science, here, is the fellow and the companion of song; we give a hand to each and follow with an innocent spirit and they conduct us to a place where the veil is so thin that we can peep through and catch a glimpse of Nature at her occult work.

But we must be pure in heart and put sophiscation from us, even as the Percivals and Galahads who sought for the Grail. No scoffer could follow a tablespoonful of Doctor Gumph's Wonder Oil down through the esophagus and into the stomach and out through the pylorus and watch it at its wizard work of creating a new duodenum out of nothing. These inductions into the esoteric, these glances at creation in a lyric mood, are only for eyes that have not been filmed over with the horn of cynicism.

Preface to Old Doctor Gumph's Almanac

The minds nourished exclusively upon Almanacs such as this of Old Doctor Gumph should be full of variety and delight. Astronomy came out of astrology, chemistry came out of alchemy, and they are forever striving to escape from the prosaic and return to the untrammeled state whence they came. Old Doctor Gumph likes to encourage them. Science, in the hands of Old Doctor Gumph, is not laborious and exact and uninteresting; he perpetuates old legends and creates new ones. The secret of his Wonder Oil for Man and Beast was told him by a dying gypsy, who strayed into his camp in the Everglades, and the formula had been handed down by word of mouth for scores of generations; the recipe was known to the Egyptian priests four thousand years ago, and without the Wonder Oil to heal their bruises and harden their muscles and correct their digestive systems the workmen of Khufu would never have been able to build the great pyramid. Later, Doctor Gumph hints, it played an important part in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Old Doctor Gumph is a liar, and yet it is safe

Prefaces

to plant beans when he tells you to plant them, for that bit of lore actually was handed down from the priestly scientists of old Egypt, who said they got it from Osiris.

There is something in humanity that always leaps up and believes again at the bidding of spells and charms and incantations; and this is a true instinct, for the incantation is an attempt to sing in tune with the vaster rhythms and the tidal moods of the creating universe. So, we say, the mind nourished exclusively upon Doctor Gumph's Almanac should be a more interesting and companionable mind than the one cultivated by some of the modern dogmatists of science who jeer at the imagination.

We never knew but one such person.

This was a woman who lived in a little house in the woods about a mile from a small town in the middle West, and the woods were full of her children. She had buried three husbands, and she used to sit in the doorway of her cottage and smoke her corncob pipe and look at their graves, which were in a row among a clump of hazel a little way from her door, and speculate

Preface to Old Doctor Gumph's Almanac

upon life and death and the world and the weather and husbands, and whether any one would ever marry her again. All her reading had been almanacs; she had never read anything else, and every Saturday she went to town and searched the counters of the two drugstores for new ones. Old Doctor Gumph was her favorite, but her mind was open; she read them all.

She loved the striking words in the pamphlets, and she had named her eighteen children from them. There was Zodiac, a girl, and the eldest, known familiarly as Zody; there were Cartilage and Anthrax and Peruna, and Epidermis; there was Whitsuntide and Pellagra and Gumph and Pisces; there were Perihelion and Tonsilitis and Everglade and Oppodeldoc and the twins, Total Eclipse and Partial Eclipse, and there was poor little Lunar, who had something the matter with his eyes, and who, although he was four years old, could not walk, and was dragged about everywhere on a sort of sled made of barrel staves by Capricorn and Peroxide.

Prefaces

Mrs. Akely loved these names; but she had found a name that she loved better than them all, and she would sit and smoke her pipe and wish for another child that she might name him Cerebellum. But it did not seem likely that she would marry again, for she was no longer young and she was not attractive; she habitually neglected her personal appearance, using snuff as well as smoking tobacco. She bore her grief and disappointment as well as she could, but it ached her within, and all her wise and wholesome talk of the weather and the Seven Wonders of the World and love philters and the effect of the moon upon young plants and the magic properties of Gumph's Oil was uttered through an almost palpable atmosphere of wistful and hopeless longing. How many of these balked and pathetic figures there are in the world!

Doctor Gumph—Old Doctor Gumph!—what a mind he has! If he had not been a great scientist he would have been a great Sunday Editor!

*Preface to a Book of
Paragraphs*



Preface to a Book of Paragraphs X

SOLOMON, the first Paragrapher of whom we have authentic record—and, indeed, one of the best of us—got more fun out of it than any one of us ever has since.

For Solomon was King in Jerusalem.

When Solomon produced a quip of which he was especially proud he would have it graved on a tablet of brass five cubits square, and it would be set over against the base of one of the two pillars that were before the temple. If it was a serious paragraph it would be set over against the right hand pillar, Jachin, and if it was a humorous paragraph it would be set over against the left hand pillar, which was called Boaz. And if the people saw something on Boaz they knew it was to be laughed at, and they laughed. In the course of time it became the custom about Jerusalem when a man had

said something especially witty to remark: "That is one on Boaz."

Having produced his Quip and set up the brazen tablet against Boaz, the King would send out Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, and their sons and their brethren, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals and psalteries and harps, and with them a hundred and twenty Levites sounding upon trumpets; and this procession winding through the streets of the city was sure to attract a crowd. Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, halting at each of the busiest corners, would announce, after an alarum and flourish of trumpets:

"Behold, O Israel, it hath pleased thy King, yea even Solomon, thy King, to write for thee an exceedingly clever Paragraph. It sitteth over against the pillar Boaz, for the King is good; out of his loving kindness hath he caused the Quip to be placed upon the pillar Boaz, that his people may read and rejoice thereat. Therefore, assemble at the pillar Boaz, and rejoice with exceeding great mirth, and praise the King, yea, even Solomon, thy King; out of thy mouths

Preface to a Book of Paragraphs

laugh, and with a great noise of laughter make the earth to shake, lest an evil thing befall thee; lest plague and pestilence seize upon the land and the King rage amongst his loving people with fire and sword. Get thee to the pillar Boaz, for thy King would have thee merry."

And then the procession would go on to the next corner.

Solomon would sit upon the throne of ivory, overlaid with pure gold, which the workmen of Hiram of Tyre (the original Roycrofter) fashioned for him—and which was always brought out and placed, on these occasions, between the two pillars—and all Judah and Israel and Benjamin would file before him and look at the pillar Boaz, and laugh. It was at one such affair that the Queen of Sheba remarked to Solomon:

"Thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants."

The King, it may be inferred, loved to have the happiness of his servants commented upon, for: "King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba

all her desire, whatsoever she asked" . . . She, there is no doubt, had been something of an inspiration to him in his writing; no doubt he owed the tone and turn of many a paragraph to her: "Neither (says an ancient Chronicler) was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."

Now and then a Hittite or a Perizzite, newly from the provinces, unacquainted with the fashionable jargon of Jerusalem, and wondering what it was all about, would look at the brazen plate set over against the pillar Boaz and fail to laugh as he passed by. He would gape, with hanging bucolic jaws, as he puzzled over the Quip, and stumble dully down the street, scowling in his perplexity. Solomon, indicating him with his scepter, would murmur to the Captain of the Guard:

“There goeth one void of understanding; yea, a fool; he hath not an understanding heart. He hath not said unto Wisdom, thou art my sister! nor called Understanding, my kinswoman! He is an abomination to my land; the mouth of the foolish is a present distraction.

Preface to a Book of Paragraphs

Shall there not be a rod for the back of him that is void of understanding? Yea, and an arrow shall strike through his liver!"

And the Captain of the Guard, a man chosen for his ability to take a hint without a kick, would know what to do, and would do it, muttering: "Good understanding giveth favor; but the way of the transgressor is hard!"

It is to be supposed that the people of Jerusalem, even though they admired and appreciated their King, sometimes would laugh only in a perfunctory manner, for we find Solomon complaining about the twentieth year of his reign: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of mirth is heaviness!" He was a King who was always watching his people to do them good; he was an observant King, and he had noticed that.

Ah! that was the life!

Preface to a Book of Patterns



Preface to a Book of Patterns

THE universe exists; it always has; it always will; everything which is now in it was always in it and always will be. It cannot escape itself. But fresh combinations of existing elements are infinitely possible. And the universe, being unable to commit suicide and end it all—and being unable to go crazy and forget itself, since its craze would immediately be the standard of sanity—keeps very busy producing these fresh combinations of its various parts in order to relieve the otherwise intolerable tedium of being the universe.

A little reflection on the part of the young philosopher-poets who are forever reproaching the universe for being what it is should induce in those gentlemen a more liberal and lenient attitude. After all, the universe is doing the best it can. Our feeling toward it, when we have

taken it up at all, in a serious way, has always been one of pity rather than blame. We may suggest reforms for the future, but we are not inclined to dwell harshly upon past mistakes; it is, on the whole, a friend of ours, and we are willing to allow bygones to be bygones; we seldom think of it without a sympathetic sense of how far it has come and how far it has to go and how tired it must be. And it is likely that if it were a part of us, instead of our being a part of it, the reversal of conditions would result in no more general satisfaction than obtains at present. We may add, in passing, that this continuing kindness of ours with regard to the universe is all the more creditable to us since the universe has never yet unbent so far as to show us a manifestation of reciprocal good nature; it gives us everything we desire but compliments; it is a friend, but an austere friend. But we are not complaining; it is intensely occupied; from center to circumference it is wearily or feverishly busy. (If it has a circumference; we can never think of its having one without wondering what is outside of the circumference;

Preface to a Book of Patterns

and it is equally discouraging to the mind to try to think of it as not having one. This is a matter, however, which we propose to consider earnestly in a little essay to be entitled the "Preface to a Book of Hypodermic Needles.")

Our reflections upon the universe, we may as well state here, sprang from the contemplation of a Book of Patterns. The patterns set us to thinking about the shapes of things in general, and why things are the shapes they are, and from that, by easy gradations, we approached a mood of wonder as to the shape of the universe itself. We decided that it is spherical. We do not know how we know it is spherical; but we defy you to say over and over to yourself, rapidly and steadily for thirty minutes, that the universe is spherical, and then think of it as being any other shape. That is our dogma: The Universe Is Spherical; we shall be at no pains to impose it upon you; we merely point out to you how you may impose it upon yourself, if you wish; and the wish to receive any dogma must necessarily precede its accep-

tance. This hint as to dogma we throw out gratuitously to those who are thinking of starting new religions or popularizing old ones. Make your dogma attractive at the start, and do not change it too readily; yet, if you must change it, change it courageously. No dogma lasts as long as the spiritual necessity which produces all dogmas; every dogma has its day. If it ever occurs to us that the universe is not spherical after all, we shall publicly testify to our change of belief.

This spherical universe, then, which we are presenting to your consideration—we hope not for the first time—is forever busily engaged in working up the same old parts of itself into new combinations, new shapes, new forms, because it must keep interested in something and can't die. No new stuff, whether spiritual stuff or material stuff—if matter is anything but spirit that has bumped around till it got coarsened and calloused—no new stuff is available to the universe, and so what we call the process of creation consists of what Browning meant when he had Abt Vogler say:

Preface to a Book of Patterns

“Out of three sounds . . . not a
fourth sound but a star.”

To what extent gods participate personally in this process of creation is a problem that will likely have to wait for solution until we write another essay to be entitled “Preface to a Book of Court Plaster.” But we should say, offhand, that gods do not bother much with the details. The one thing more interesting than making things would be to make things make themselves. For instance, the gods at the present day are making man make himself. As Hermione herself has remarked, so often and so feelingly, “*What* would the human race be without evolution?”

But we intended, using the Book of Patterns as a jumping-off place, to write something about Art, and Form. And we have strayed into religion and science, as so many people do who talk about Art; perhaps the three are one.

Form is all there is to Art. Art is creation; Creation is merely combining old parts of the universe into new shapes; the only new thing

Prefaces

that Art can bring to the universe is a new Form; when gods and men create their souls sweat with the ecstatic agony of the process and the sweat dribbles into the created thing and makes it live; without this sweat nothing gets made, whether it is an avatar, a poem or a world; unless this soul-sweat gets into it (divine effluvia!) the avatar or the poem or the world amounts to nothing much; unless it has a Form to get into the sweat of the soul is in vain; it must have a Form to act upon and through.

Some of the painters and poets mixed up with the “new” movements—*vers libre*, cubism, and that sort of thing, are really seeking new forms. More of them are trying to escape from Form altogether and still have Art. The latter imagine a vain thing. It can’t be done. We have interrogated the universe, and we say so. . . . We intended to develop that one profoundly original idea into an entire essay, but we get off on the wrong foot again. It will have to wait for proper elaboration and particular application until we can get around to writing our “Preface to the Collected Poems of Fothergil Finch.”

*Preface to the Works of
Billy Sunday*



Preface to the Works of Billy Sunday

WE have received, in connection with some remarks we published in a New York paper concerning Billy Sunday, the preacher, several letters asking why we object to him.

“Even if he is lacking in taste,” one of them says, “don’t you think he is doing good?”

We do not. And we are not greatly concerned about his lack of taste. We are not shocked because he uses slang; slang may be the vehicle of genuine convictions. Nor do we worry about the amount of money he makes. Nor have his free and easy “conversations with God,” to be quite candid, particularly repelled us; for we can imagine a kind of person who

might so “converse” with God very seriously and sincerely, and therefore not offensively.

Our detestation of what he is doing goes deeper than his surfaces and manners; it goes to the essential spirit of the man as revealed in his continual, morbid emphasis on the idea of Hell.

The word Hell rings through his sermons like a clanging tocsin. It seems never to be far from his tongue. The thought of Hell appears to be ever present in his mind. Fear, fear of Hell, is the chief *motif* of his performance. The sense of Hell as a waiting, reaching, creeping, enveloping, concrete thing he deliberately implants in the minds of his hearers. Directly or indirectly, but artfully and assiduously, he fosters the growth of this implanted fear until it bears its crop of hysteria. There is a smack of relish goes with his utterance of his threats and warnings; this crude, effective psychologist of terror knows his power and exults in the exercise of it.

If we were a preacher of any sort, and a man came to us and said he wished to become a mem-

Preface to the Works of Billy Sunday

ber of our church solely because he was afraid of going to Hell, we would not feel any great satisfaction or exultation; it would not seem to us that our creed had greatly triumphed. We might feel, indeed, that Hell had frightened a soul away from it; but we would not feel so sure that Heaven had attracted one to it. A man that is merely saved from Hell is only half saved; he has to work his way to Heaven yet; and he will not work his way thither because he is impelled by fear.

To come to it briefly and directly, fear is the most base and ignoble of motives. Men may be frightened into conformity, but never into virtue. We insult all the saints of all the creeds if we suppose that they sneaked and scurried into their Heavens with the curs of terror snapping at their heels. There are many myths concerning deity incarnate, but the instinct of humanity has always been too sound to imagine a Jesus or a Prometheus whose courage faltered.

The creeds that have endured have endured because of the truth in them; and this truth has always been a courage about life on earth and

a high thought concerning the ultimate destiny of the spirit. Fiends have not prodded us up the difficult ascents of time, but our godlike men and heroes have gone before and beckoned, and the spark of divinity in our dust has flared up and we have struggled after them.

To put the accent upon fear, in dealing with human souls, is to spread the cult of that from which we should strive to rescue men; it is to shove men backward into the jungles of their racial childhood; it degrades the intellect and deforms the spirit.

But tell them confidently of a high and noble destiny, worth striving after for its own sake, and those who have fuel in them kindle. Nor is it any sordid bribe of joy that will truly awaken them; their real struggle is to be, and not to gain; when they have discerned in a Christ or a Buddha the thing they wished to be they have needed no other bribe; sacrifices have not repelled them, the austerities of the way have not daunted them; they have striven and they have failed, but they still have striven. They will always be thrilled with the high romance of this

Preface to the Works of Billy Sunday

eternal battle. Appeal to their fears, cultivate their fears, encourage their fears, play upon their fears: all that is easy enough to do, and they can be set milling like cattle by it; nevertheless, however it may excite them emotionally, spiritually it is disintegrating and debasing.

This unceasing talk of Hell is iniquitous, and the reek of it is an abomination beneath the clean and friendly sun; it is the last gabbling echo of the silly tales we gibbered when we were blue-lipped apes back yonder in the gray dawn of time; and one day it will fall on silence; there will come a language in which the thing is not. As skulls grow broader, so do creeds. It is not the devils we create from our fears and weaknesses that help us; it is our bolder thoughts that succor and sustain, our bolder thoughts, returning from communion with the gods we sent them out into the unknown to find or make.

Preface to a Calendar



Preface to a Calendar

IN a former preface we had something to say about the shape of the universe. We established the fact, we believe, that it is spherical. Having thus said all that it is essential to say about Space, let us take up Time in a serious way and see what can be made of it.

We will deal more particularly with Future Time. It is difficult to discuss the Present, because it will not hold still long enough. As for the Past, great portions of it lie open to the view of all men; they see it differently, and anything we might say about it would be sure to start an argument. It is not our purpose, in these prefaces, to argue with our readers; we merely intend to shout things at them and run on.

The most interesting question with regard to the Future is whether it exists already, or

whether it has not yet been created. Our own opinion is that a great deal of the Future exists already, and that it has not yet caught up with us.

Or, to put it another way, Past, Present and Future exist simultaneously in different parts of the same solar system.

Let us say that it takes eight thousand years for a ray of sunlight to travel from the sun to this earth.

We do not know exactly how long it does take. We wish we did, for we like to be accurate even in these trivial details. There is a book in the house that might tell us. But we have just moved. And some confounded sliding arrangement at the side of the baby's crib was broken in the move. That side of the crib is now propped off the floor with twenty or thirty books. The book that tells exactly the distance from the sun to the earth and the length of time it takes a ray of light working union hours to go that distance is one of those particular books. We would rather (great as is our passion for exactitude) never know the facts than risk wak-

Preface to a Calendar

ing the baby by trying to get the book.* Even in neighborhoods where we are known it has been whispered about that no child would cry like that unless his parents deliberately tortured him throughout the night. And in a new neighborhood . . .

Let us say that it takes eight thousand years for a ray of light to travel from the sun to the earth. The light that makes this day *to-day* left the sun centuries before dog-faced Agamemnon launched his Grecian barks or Hector was a pup at Troy. A million days that we know not yet are already in existence and on their way to us, carrying with them their light and heat and the germs of their events, since all life is from the sun. A day that is four thousand years within our Future is four thousand years within the sun's Past; the sun got rid of it, threw it at us, that many years ago; half way between the sun and the earth that day speeds merrily along, making a brief Present wherever it passes, but

* We have since found the book and learned that our figures are astonishingly incorrect. But the principle remains the same.

we will not be here when it arrives. By the sun's time you and we, and the infant phenomenon across the hall reposing in such blessed unsophistication above two dozen second hand volumes of encyclopedia full of entirely immaterial knowledge, have been dead nearly eight thousand years.

One may have been dead that long, of course, and still feel young and strong occasionally; there is some comfort in that. And always, to remember that one has been dead that long, is a salutary check upon human vanity. It should give us—(we always try to get some moral reflection into these prefaces)—it should give us a more kindly fellow feeling for such dusty celebrities as the Mummy of Rameses, the Pilt-down Skull and Senator La Follette. If it discourages ambition, it also discourages discouragement. Since the sun threw off our death day nearly eight thousand years ago, it is scarcely worth while worrying about a future event that is so far in the past; we will be sticking around somewhere when said death day reaches us, but

Preface to a Calendar

no one need be expected to act as if he found any news in it when it gets here.

This Future that rushes upon us, cries presently and confusingly in our ears and is gone before we can collect our wits to answer—where does it go to then? The day existed; it overtook us; it went by; does it still exist somewhere? It came to earth; it left earth; perhaps it took something as it went by—and is it now, with what it took, traversing the next planet to the west as you steer toward the cosmic jumping-off place? Does the day, with what we gave the day, await us? And may we overtake it by a sudden acceleration of speed, such as a soul must manifest when it pops hot and light and eager out of a body?—and may we live in the warm middle and tingling presence of that day again? It seems altogether possible to us that when we shall through the pearly gates we may find some of these days sitting up with the lights all turned on waiting for us, like commuters' wives.

Now and then we have the feeling that a certain action has been performed before; we are

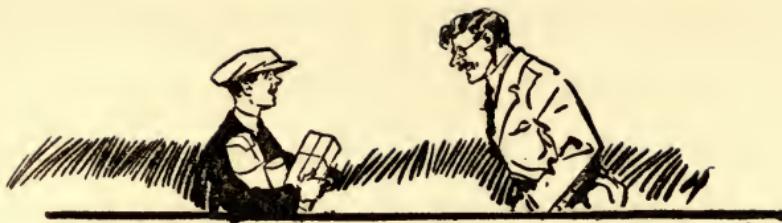
Prefaces

arrested in mid-gesture with the consciousness that the situation is not new to us; it comes over us with a sudden eeriness that we are repeating a particular rôle; many persons are very subject to such uncanny seizures. Perhaps these strange moments are stray bits of days that our souls have lived through previously; bits that have been broken off somehow and are left lying about loose; they went by us and then they lagged, and now we have caught up with them again.

There isn't, really, any such thing as Time. If there were there couldn't be eternity. Past, Present and Future are all alike, all one. There is no time. There are only imperishable events, in the midst of which we flutter and change to something else and flutter on again. The Cosmos—(poor thing!)—didn't begin and it can't end.

Which is one advantage a preface has over the cosmos.

Preface to a Study of the Current Stage



Preface to a Study of the Current Stage

I GAVE the boy who delivers the groceries a ticket to a war melodrama recently. A few days later he described the play to me. He described it as if he were a discoverer.

"It was the darndest thing you ever saw," he said. "You get what it's about easier than you do a regular show, on account of them talking it out. But it seemed kind of funny at first to hear them chewing the rag like that. It didn't seem real, till you got used to it, like a regular show does."

"What do you mean by a regular show?" I asked him, puzzled.

He meant, I learned, the movies. I cross-questioned him. He has been going to the movies every time he could get hold of a spare nickel for seven or eight years, and he is now

fifteen. He has been to a few vaudeville shows; he has seen a couple of circuses. But the war play was actually the first spoken drama he had ever attended.

It was a novelty to him. I gathered from what he said that he felt like encouraging it. He took a liberal attitude towards this new thing, the spoken drama. It was quaint, it didn't move fast enough, it was too long, too many things happened in one place, and there was an abiding strangeness in hearing the spoken words. But on the whole the queer experiment had made a big hit with him.

"It's funny," he repeated, "it's darned funny to hear them chewing the rag like that every time they're getting ready to do something. But I kind of liked it when I got used to it. Though, of course," he concluded, "it *ain't* a regular show."

The movies have been shown to millions of people during the last ten years. They have chased a certain type of cheap melodrama off the boards. I wonder how many thousands, how many hundreds of thousands, of people

Preface to a Study of the Current Stage

there are, from twelye to twenty years old, who regard them as the “regular show,” and to whom the spoken drama would be more or less of a novelty!

*Preface to a Book of Safety
Pins*





Preface to a Book of Safety Pins

HERE they are, four in a row and two rows to a card, and a dozen cards bound into a neat little book . . . a Little Book of Diaper Pins, of assorted sizes, compiled by affectionate hands. . .

Yes; Diaper Pins! Why should we be more squeamish about mentioning these little necessary things than the women's magazines? . . . When we take our tone from the women's magazines we are certain we are not offending current taste. We have all worn Diaper Pins; some of us have adjusted them with care and particularity about the persons of our agitated offspring; some of us hope, in our fatuous human way, to stick them sentimentally into the undergarments of our grandchildren . . . if we are permitted to. Will we be permitted to? We are not sure whether this is one of the

Prefaces

privileges allowed by the ruling generation to doddering age, or not. Between the gruel of infancy and the gruel of senility are many years of teeth; but before teeth come, and after teeth depart, we act and eat at the sufferance of those who can rule the roasts of life, and chew them.

All that we know about infants will, perhaps unfortunately, never be published. But we have had a thought of interest to Young Fathers, and we pass it on: Do not resign your authority over your child too completely in favor of the Scientific Managers.

Some years ago we became acquainted with an Infant whose parents had tried everything on him at least once. He should have been bursting with health; he had been crammed with rules and regulations until every time he cut his finger he bled theories; and yet, he was pallid. He was wan as a Dickens Child, in Chapter Forty-seven, just before the great master, with the light of murder in his eyes, rolls up his sleeves to inflict a lingering death in seven thousand words of bastard blank verse.

It was decided by his parents that something

Preface to a Book of Safety Pins

should be done at once for Frederick . . . or "Icky," as he was called. . . .

Our very pen protests; we blush for the human race, but this unfortunate young animal was actually called Icky—heaven help him! . . . We could not invent the name Icky; only that curious creature, a young mother, is capable of thinking up Icky. . . .

It was decided, we say, that something should be done for Icky at once. Icky had gotten too far away from Nature, somehow. Icky would have to go Back to Nature.

Young Icky, in short, would gain in all ways could he but frolic in the dirt, disport himself upon naked soil, gambol gloriously in infantile abandon upon real earth. Mud pies, we believe, were mentioned, tentatively. Icky was to have a debauch of wholesomeness.

We supposed that his parents would take Icky to the beach and let him play with the ocean, or set him down in a park and encourage him to the pursuit and capture of his first angle-worm, or something of the sort.

But no. Icky was not taken to the dirt. The

Prefaces

dirt was brought to Icky. It was absolutely hygienic dirt. All the germs had been baked out of it in a laboratory. It had been fumigated and sterilized and made sanitary and anti-septic. It was clean dirt.

There were several bushels of it, and they poured it onto a big piece of oil cloth in the hall, and Icky, appropriately garbed, was set down upon it.

“Play, Icky!” said his mother.

“Frolic, Icky!” said his father.

“Gambol, Icky!” said his mother.

And Icky wanly gamboled. He was not enthusiastic, but he played. He was puzzled, but he is a patient child; he has learned a weary toleration of the various fads to which his parents subject him; he is obedient, and he painstakingly frolicked.

This first mad gambol of Icky's we were privileged to witness. Inquiring a few weeks later as to how Icky and Mother Nature (that grand old nurse) were getting along together, we learned that Icky, the third time over the course, balked and refused absolutely to frisk at all.

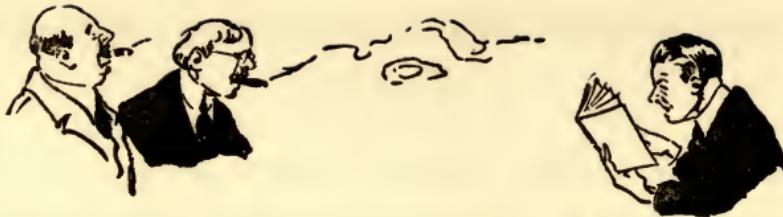
Preface to a Book of Safety Pins

The clean dirt was eventually thrown away—out into the back yard, with common, ordinary dirt.

Icky is a peculiarly ungrateful child. In spite of all that his parents do for him, in the way of Scientific Management, he persists in remaining pale.

We intended to limit ourselves to a few remarks on Safety Pins, but, as usual, became more interested in our own digression than our subject proper. The main thought was this: Why is a thing of such potential deadliness as the Safety Pin still in use? Men will have to invent a substitute; women never will, or it had been done decades ago. In a future paper, to be entitled "The Menace of the Mother," we may take up Safety Pins again . . . in a serious way.

*Preface to the Novels of
Harold Bell Wright*



Preface to the Novels of Harold Bell Wright

WE decided about a year ago that we would Get Rich Quick. As we don't know anything in particular, it was obvious from the start that we would have to find some method of capitalizing our ignorance. That naturally suggested writing a book.

It was hopeless for us to attempt to write as good a book as Thackeray or Balzac might have written; we had decided to get rich *quick*. A good book takes time and thought.

So we decided to write a poor book. We were certain we could do that. And we went and got one of Harold Bell Wright's books and read it just to see how it was done. Harold sells a million copies. Why couldn't we write the same sort of thing, and sign some one else's

Prefaces

name to it, and get rich, and spend the rest of our life in a yacht writing poetry and corking it up in bottles and throwing the bottles at the mermaids, and having a good time generally?

But after reading the book we decided that we couldn't do it. We can write just as poorly as Harold Bell—we can write just as poorly as any one that ever lived—but we can't write the *same kind* of poor stuff that Harold Bell can.

It suddenly struck us that out of all the millions of Harold's readers we had never met one face to face. We made inquiries. No one we knew had ever met a Harold Bell Wright reader, or had ever met any one who knew one.

We were piqued. We forgot entirely about getting rich quick in the new interest that had come to us. We determined that we would meet a Harold Bell Wright reader if the pursuit occupied years of o... time. The thing was not impossible. We know two people that read Gene Stratton Porter.

Our deliberate efforts were defeated. But chance, a few months ago, flung the Harold Bell

Preface to Novels of Harold Bell Wright

Wright Fan across our path. He was in a smoking compartment of a train that was getting away from Chicago, Ill., as rapidly as it could, and he was engaged in his Favorite Vice—he was actually *reading* Harold Bell—when we spotted him. We lighted a cigar and looked out of the window and waited for things to develop. We knew they would. A reader of Harold Bell Wright, in a smoking compartment with us, we said to ourself, will certainly ask us What Our Line Is within thirty minutes.

When people in smoking compartments ask us our line we always say that we have been a lawyer, but are now studying for the ministry. If they still show an interest in our business, we at once develop an interest in their souls. On several occasions we have gone so far as to convert people like that to different religions.

This Harold Fan was a rather good looking chap, better looking than you are, likely, better dressed than we were, exuding an air of prosperity. One could tell at a glance that he lived in Cleveland, liked living there, believed

Prefaces

in Cleveland's Destiny, and could tell you to the yard how many miles of paved streets that city has, and *would* tell you in spite of flood, fire and earthquake.

Presently we saw his face "was working with emotion"—we really aren't fictionizing, there wouldn't be any point to it if we were; his face *was* "working with emotion." And he saw that we had seen it work with emotion, and held out the book toward us and said:

"Did you ever read Harold Bell Wright?"

We said we had.

He gave us a look that said: "Ah, then we are friends and brothers! Let us wander, conversationally, through the broad demesne where Harold reigns as king."

We tried to return the same sort of glance; felt that we had not quite succeeded, and made a gallant effort to retrieve ourself with the remark:

"What you like about him is his Moral Sweetness, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said. "He gets *himself* into his

Preface to Novels of Harold Bell Wright

books. My uncle knew him when he was a boy. . . ."

We got it all, with dates and details. We are sorry that we can't remember it. But it would have been impolite to take notes. We got Harold's biography. This proud young man's family had known Harold from infancy.

Even in his cradle Harold had shown his Moral Worth. There were bumps on his head that indicated that his future would be no ordinary one. He learned his letters with a consciousness that the English language would one day be a valued assistant in his task of Reforming Men through Literature. He saw Spiritual Significance in the multiplication table and Purpose in geography. He was a good boy; but he was more than a good boy; he bore himself with the consciousness that he would fail morally if he were so selfish as to keep his goodness to himself. . . . He was an Influence in his teens.

Once the proud young man's uncle met Harold on a lake steamer. Our memory is treacherous, but we think that at the moment Harold was being a deckhand. The uncle had not seen

him for several years. Harold, we gathered, was probably the most moral and godly deckhand who ever sailed our great inland seas. All the temptations that are almost hourly thrown in the way of deckhands he resisted resolutely; he set his firm jaws and determined that he would not succumb to the snares set for the feet of the deckhand; the glittering palaces of luxury and pride which had softened the moral fiber of so many deckhands Harold never entered. The uncle was heartened by the talk with Harold.

Years pass by . . . the uncle meets Harold again . . . not now a deckhand but a force in literature . . . but the same old Harold . . . not proud nor haughty . . . and, mark you, Wealthy. As we have said and sung so often, it is Moral Worth that gets the Mazuma.

And after our talk with the young man whose uncle knew Harold from boyhood we realized more completely than ever before why we could never get rich quick writing a Harold Book. We don't have that kind of Moral Earnestness. And it can't be faked.

*Preface to a Book of
Statistics*



Preface to a Book of Statistics

STATISTICS have always pleased us. They thrill us. There is something romantic about them. They scratch and tickle our imagination till it wakes and yodels. A fact is a fact; an idea is merely an idea. Facts and ideas move on prescribed planes from which they cannot escape. But statistics do not necessarily have any close connection with either facts or ideas.

At will they skip over the boundary into a sort of fourth dimensional land. And there they dance like the motes one sees if one stares at the wind long enough so that the little veins in one's eyes become congested with blood corpuscles. There is always the doubt as to whether the little motes are really flickering and dancing up and down a slanting current of sunlit air or whether they are in the eyes. This doubt makes it a charming occupation to sit and watch

them gambol on spring mornings when one should be at work.

It is so with statistics; we like to wonder about them; we look at them and thrill and speculate and doubt and conjecture. But it is no joy to us to know what statistics are about. We do not wish to have them tied down to any specific subject. We love to see them dart and frolic through the pages of great tomes just for the sake of the dance itself.

When we discover that during the first six months of 1912 the United States of America exported 1,395,683 we do not care to know 1,395,683 *what*. It might be codfish, it might be pigs of iron; but what is that to us? Definiteness stops the dance; it gives us images too bold and concrete; it robs us of the fancy of 1,395,683 little motes whirling and swarming as they rise from the coast and fly out across the Atlantic with a pleasant whir and hum of multitudinous wings.

As these 1,395,683 approach the Gulf Stream perhaps they meet 2,965,355 of imports coming westward. It would only ruin the picture if we

Preface to a Book of Statistics

knew 2,965,355 *what*. It would give us something to think about; we might become convinced of the plausibility of some one's economic theory, perhaps, and our day would be spoiled.

Statistics, for us, fall naturally into various colors. For instance, 7,377,777, whether it stands for imports or exports, is undoubtedly red. But 1,019,901 is a pale, light, cool, grayish blue. And can any one doubt that 525,555,-555,555 is of a bright aggressive yellow color, and gives off a high pitched note from the rapid motion of its myriad pinions? There is something querulous and peevish and impatient about 525,555,555,555, too; we shall not admit it into the volume of statistics which we are compiling.

Hitherto there has been a science of statistics, but no art. That is, no avowed art. We suspect that certain advanced statisticians really approach the subject as we do, joyfully and all unshackled. But they pretend to be staid and dry and sober. They have respectable positions in the community to maintain. After compiling several pages of statistics full of sound and color, just for the sheer glee of reveling in sen-

sation, they become cowards and conceal their glee; they write industrial and financial and sociological articles around their lovely tables and twist them into proving something important. They conceal their art, they muffle and smother their finer impulses beneath a repellent cloak of science. They are afraid that their toys will be taken away from them if they play with them frankly, so they affect some sort of useful employment.

We remember reading somewhere, and it was cited as an example of the mental twilight of the Middle Ages, that learned clerks and doctors were accustomed to debate the question as to how many angels could stand on the point of a needle. But these medieval disputants were not stupid at all. They were quite right to be interested in such things. They were wise enough to divorce statistics from reality utterly. Things of every sort—all the arts and philosophies—suffer to-day because we insist on connecting them with a trivial reality. We try to make them prove something. We try to set them to work. And definite proofs will always be tire-

Preface to a Book of Statistics

some, and work a thing to be escaped. People are not really enthusiastic about having things proved to them, or about working; they want to have a good time. And they are quite right, too.

Once, in a country town, we heard one of the village loafers make a remark concerning a storekeeper that we have always remembered; it seems to fit in here. It was the custom, in winter time at least, to set a cigar box full of smoking tobacco on the counter near the stove, and those who came in to rest and get warm and wonder if it would be a late spring and tell smutty stories and fry their felt boots before the fire helped themselves to this tobacco without money and without price. The box was always referred to as "the paupers' box." One Mr. Dash, a merchant, put a stop to the paupers' box in his store. Joe Blank, who had been filling his pipe from it for twenty years, arose and remarked from the depths of his outraged being:

"Hennery Dash, your soul is so small that if they was millions and millions of souls the size of yourn into a flea's belly them souls would be

Prefaces

so far apart they couldn't hear each other if they was to holler."

Joe had the mind of a poet. A bungler would have said exactly how many millions of souls, would have stated their exact size and told just how far apart they were; but Joe left it vague and vast and infinitely small. A scientist would have said too much and spoiled it; not so the artist.

Statisticians deal with precious, intangible stuff, with the flecks and atomies of faery—and how few of them dare rise to the full possibilities of their medium! They are merely foolish when they might so readily achieve insanity if they had but the courage to be themselves.

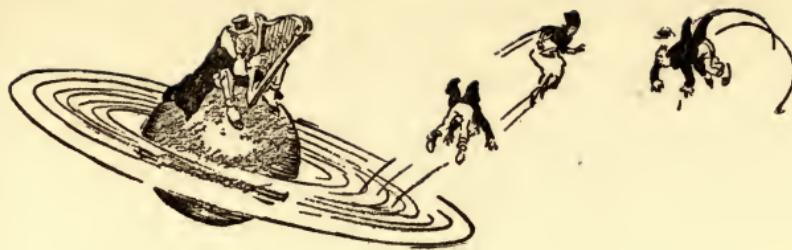
There are, for instance, 1,345 statisticians in this land who would know, if they were laid end to end, that 4,988,898,888 is green in color, a deep, dark green. Yet they are all afraid to stand forth like men and say so; they are afraid of what people will think of them. They are obsessed with the belief that materials are significant, without stopping to reflect that, even

Preface to a Book of Statistics

were this so, significance would still remain immaterial.

And even if we feel a chill of fear creeping over us—we dare not keep on in this vein any longer or some one will catch us and make a circulation manager for a newspaper out of us.

*Preface to a Moral Book of
Arithmetic*



Preface to a Moral Book of Arithmetic

THE mathematical textbook to which this is intended as an introduction is not yet completed; but when it is completed it will be different from any other treatise on arithmetic in the world. It will have no very large numbers in it, for very large numbers are not only vulgarly ostentatious in themselves (and therefore offensive to persons of taste) but they are immoral as well.

There will be a good many 7's in it and a good many 3's. Sevens and 3's are attractive numbers. But there will be few 8's and no more 6's than are absolutely necessary. The figure 6 does not please the eye when written, nor does the word six please the ear when spoken. Five is an excellent number and 5 is a quaint and not repel-

lent figure; 4 does very well; 1 is often impressive; 2 is always insignificant; 0, which is the gateway to the fourth dimension, deserves a separate treatise for that reason. And there is a kind of elegance about 0. But it is too much removed from life; there is no passion about it, somehow. We can admire 0; we can wonder at it; we could never love it, nor sin for its sake; neither would it regenerate us; it is lacking in heat and humanity.

But 7 satisfies us, poetically and as a man. It has been well called the Perfect Number: all times, all climes, all peoples, all literatures, have attempted to utter the mystic and unutterable virtues of 7. There are Seven Pleiads and Seven Sutherland Sisters, Seven Hells and Seven Candles; from the Old Testament to Dunsany's "Gods of the Mountain" it has been invoked to impress us, for it is strangely and inherently impressive. The heavens declare its glory and the external and material world falls naturally into heptagonal patterns . . . naturally, or magically! For it is a magic number. Verse written on a rhythmic scheme which re-

Preface to a Moral Book of Arithmetic

gards the occult properties of seven is better than any other verse; and queer things happen in a seven handed poker game that we have never seen happen anywhere else.

Personally, we never had anything but good luck in our life, and we feel that we always shall be lucky, and that is because there are seven letters in our last name; and when we die, at the age of 105, we shall go and dwell for a while on the planet Saturn, which is ringed with seven rings, each ring being of a gorgeous color; and we shall wear a wonderful coat of the seven primary colors and twang a seven-stringed harp, and to the measured twanging of that harp all the people we didn't like will be compelled to jump through and over those rings. This is no random prophecy, we should state; it was settled ages ago; it cost us two dollars, if remembrance does not fail, to learn our destiny, and the black-browed lady to whom we paid the money—her name was Isis, she said, and she was once an Egyptian princess—also added that we would travel a great deal and it might be well for us to beware of a dark

gentleman. We intend to take Isis up more in detail when we write our "Preface to a Dream Book."

But this (though it thrills us) is too personal, perhaps, to be widely interesting. Our own private superstitions, and mere questions of taste, and speculations concerning magic, would not of themselves have been sufficient to induce us to write our new arithmetic.

There are, as we have hinted, Moral reasons for the Work. It is an Arithmetic With a Purpose. It is an Arithmetic from which large numbers will be excluded; it is an Arithmetic which is intended to be the beginning of a propaganda against large numbers.

For large numbers have an odd effect upon the mind of man. Briefly and bluntly, they make him wicked. They seduce his spirit into all manner of vainglory and irreverence and megalomania. A statesman sees that his country has a population of 16,304,129 persons, and he pores over the figures until they induct him by an evil magnetism into dreams of armies

Preface to a Moral Book of Arithmetic

and conquest and empire. A bank clerk reads that Crœsus was worth \$86,924,066.29, and he wrecks his life and perhaps his country trying to get twice as much; a sheepherder discovers that Norval fed 868,466 sheep upon the Grampian Hills and is no longer a simple shepherd, but a fevered lunatic burning with the notion that he must become the Napoleon of the Mutton Chop; a scientist finds that a brother scientist has counted 138,748,666 germs clinging to the .053071098th part of a square inch of bronchitis, and he sets out to discover or invent a disease that will assay a billion bacilli to the square inch, using up hundreds of guinea pigs in the process. Large numbers exert a malign influence upon the imagination; something unsocial and sinister and detached from reality and demoniac steals out of them like a vapor to corrode and corrupt the pink and innocent convolutions of the brain. At one period the theologians very nearly let the world go to the devil because they got so busy disputing how many angels could stand on the point of a

Prefaces

needle, and they were perfectly well-meaning theologians at that.*

The case is stated very clearly in the Bible. Certain leaders among the Jews wanted to number the people. God told them not to. He knew what would happen. They would become so excited looking at the large numbers that they would get some wicked notion about falling on neighboring States and subjugating them. And when Providence told them not to, they did it anyhow; and, if we remember rightly, the result was that they brought down some sort of a pestilence upon themselves.

But it is useless to multiply examples. A casual glance through the history of the world is enough to convince any open-minded person that large numbers looked at too long have been primarily responsible for the ruin of all the individuals and commonwealths that have ever been ruined. In our new Arithmetic more stress will be laid upon the Esthetic and Moral

* It is true that we have taken another view of these theologians in another Preface . . . but that was in another Preface. Ideas change color according to the company they keep.

Preface to a Moral Book of Arithmetic

Value of such numbers as the student is encouraged to commune with, in their natural condition, than upon what might happen if those numbers were added or subtracted or multiplied. A few simple astronomical calculations will be permitted for the convenience of mariners. But astronomy is a subject we intend to take up in a more thorough way when we write our essay to be entitled "A Preface to Dr. Harter's Almanac."

Preface to a Book Withheld





Preface to a Book Withheld

THE book to which this is the preface will never get into type. It consists, or would have consisted, of some eighteen hundred jests, short poems, anecdotes, etc., which have been considered too daring, on the whole, for newspaper publication. The "art form" known as the Limick predominates.

We do not wish it to be inferred that there is anything actually ribald in these jests and rhymes. Swift would have thought them slow; and they would have lacked the pep to

.....*fill*
The spicy times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

Most of them contain, we aver, more wit than Boccaccio's "Decameron"; they are more chaste than Balzac's "Droll Stories"; they are more

Prefaces

delicate than Smollett; they are more candidly what they are than the equivocal Sterne.

We fling them into the waste paper basket, after having considered some of them almost daily for two or three years, with a sigh; we do not quite dare to publish them in a newspaper which may finally line the pantry shelves and come to the attention of some young Finnish cook with an unformed mind; after all, we must try to be, in our modest way, a guardian of public taste; in thousands of homes to-day the young of both s-x-s are getting their first impressions of life and literature from the editorial pages, Heaven help them! We must practice the circumspection which Cæsar recommended to his wife. (Parenthetically, we must suppose Cæsar's wife to have been a woman of great generosity. He said, "Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion." And she forbore to answer, "Yes, Julius, and that will be easier for me than for you. I have never traveled in Egypt.")

We fling these contributions away; but the world has missed something.

Some of them are so triumphantly respectable

Preface to a Book Withheld

—in spite of your wicked mind! Some of them are so discreet! Some of them skate with such composure over such thin ice! Some of them smile at you with such demure innocence up to the point at which you begin to smile at them! We give you our word, there is scarcely one of them you would not enjoy and repeat if our sternly puritanical cast of mind did not deny them to you.

There is, for instance, the one which goes:

There was a young fellow from Frisco
Who never had eaten Nabisco

• • •

• • •

• the risk, O!

Truly, it is a harmless thing. It would not shock us were we the dean of a theological seminary. If you took a girl to the play and it was repeated on the stage she would not, necessarily, feel called upon to rush from the place and report it to her mother. We have been on the verge of printing it in its entirety a dozen times these last two years . . . and yet, now, we are

too cowardly and conservative. We compromise that we may remain . . . uncompromised. How can we be quite sure what construction might have been put upon the interesting lines omitted if we had *not* omitted them?

We live in an age so remarkably pure, because it is so frequently reformed whether it likes it or not, that our apprehension of the iniquity in the minds of others has become almost abnormally acute. And we fear that all those others who may not have iniquity in their minds may have the same over-sharp perception of iniquity that we have. This makes us finical. This makes us cling tightly to appearances. This makes us discard many a pretty little trifle that Rabelais would not have hesitated over for an instant.

There is an anecdote, which goes:

“An Irishman named Pat, upon being asked, ‘Do ?’ replied, with a flash of Celtic wit, ‘No, yer honor, but ’”

The thing is as essentially happy and charming as the limerick which preceded it. But we will say no more about it. Enough that we are

Preface to a Book Withheld

at one with our era and have the keen, censorious rectitude which condemns all these sprightly chirrupers to silence.

It will not have escaped our readers that in calling attention to our suppression of this book we have also called attention to our own nice morality. Many will incline to the opinion that we might better have suppressed it and said nothing about the suppression. There is much to be said for that opinion. But such reticence is out of fashion, and we are too thoroughly in sympathy with present times and present manners to seem to criticize them by affecting a superiority to them. We suppress the book and we call attention to the suppression in order that our virtue may be known to all men. The points of taste and ethics involved in this policy are many and we hope to treat them more adequately when we write our "Preface to the Report of a Committee for the Suppression of Literature."

More than that; we are seeking for a particular job and we take this means of advertising our fitness for it. We wish the job of edit-

Prefaces

ing and rewriting all the world's great literary masterpieces so that they will be acceptable to all the organizations and individuals that are now a bit suspicious of them because they are masterpieces. And unless we announce our suitability for the task, how shall it ever become known?

Just another quotation from the slain book before we reluctantly drop the last leaf of it into the waste basket:

There was a young fellow named . . .

• • • • •
• • • • •
• • • • •
• • • • •

Innocuous, we swear! Innocent as the snow-white hair that trembles underneath the halo of a saint!

And yet, could we trust you with it?

For its innocence is of that sort of awakened innocence which is not by any means ignorant; its innocence moves daintily and delicately on the blushing feet of knowledge past a little area

Preface to a Book Withheld

of less harmless sophistication, shrinking and mincing as the danger is avoided. One joggle from a thought less generously obtuse and the poem's pink toes might be stained.

We consign it to oblivion rather than that it should be misunderstood!

Preface to Hoyt's Rules



Preface to Hoyt's Rules

IN introducing this compilation of rules I must confess to a certain disappointment that the guiding principles of the game of Shark Loo have been omitted.

If there is no such game, then I am forced to the conclusion that an aged nautical gentleman whom I met some years ago in the vicinity of a seamen's home on Staten Island is a person to be distrusted. He was the only person I ever encountered who smoked a pipe and chewed tobacco at the same time, and the veins on the backs of his hands were very blue and very knotty, and in his mild and faded eye there was a milky innocence.

His father before him had been a seafaring man (he said), and in the thirties of the last century had been cast away upon the coast of

Prefaces

Borneo, among the Dyaks. These Dyaks were not persons whom his father (who was a fastidious man) would voluntarily have chosen as his associates. His father (who was an alert man) observed that they were great gamblers. His father (who was a natural born leader) speedily acquired great influence among the Dyaks, and (because his father was a pious man) endeavored to make them stop gambling.

His father succeeded (for his father was a persuasive man) in making his Dyaks promise to give up every gambling game except one. This game his father (who had an inventive turn of mind) named Shark Loo. It was a variation (so his father, a man always interested in games of chance in a purely scientific way, told him) of Fly Loo. In playing Fly Loo each gambler contributes a coin to a pool; each gambler is provided with a lump of sugar; these lumps of sugar are arranged in a row; the gambler upon whose lump of sugar a fly first perches takes the pool. The Dyak version (my informant's father was shocked to note) consisted in trussing up Chinese pirates (who in-

Preface to Hoyt's Rules

fested those coasts and were frequently captured by the Dyaks) to the ends of long bamboo poles, and letting them into the sea off the ends of wharves and boat landings. The Dyak whose Chinese pirate first attracted a shark won the pool. This sport, which his otherwise docile Dyaks would on no account give up, so wrought upon my informant's father (who was a humane man) that he eventually left Borneo, or he might otherwise have founded a dynasty there, and my informant might have been King of Borneo at the present day.

If you wish further information from the Rightful Heir to the Throne of Borneo (as his father, who died a melancholy and disappointed man, always called him) look for an old gentleman in whose eye of faded blue there dwells a milky innocence.

He had once been cast away, he told me, on an island off the coast of South America; and for years he had nothing to eat but cockatoos and monkeys. This diet had had a surprising effect upon him . . . but this part of the Preface seems to fall naturally into rhyme:

Prefaces

As I was passing the Seamen's Rest
There skipped across the street
A sailor who screamed like a cockatoo
And used his hands for feet.

"Now, wherefore, mariner," quoth I,
"Confuse the foot and hand?
And why you crew like a cockatoo
I cannot understand."

Then he swung himself from a fire-escape,
And he hung there easy and free
Like a tropical monk from a pine tree trunk,
And he spun this yarn to me:

"On the *Reuben Ranzo* I set sail,
And I was the larboard mate,
And a nautical guy you will never spy
More orderly nor sedate;

"I never used my feet for hands,
Nor yet my hands for feet,
I never screamed like a cockatoo
For biscuits for to eat.

"But I eats as other humans does,
And my tastes is nowise quaint,
And I never springs no caudal swings
With a tail which really ain't;

Preface to Hoyt's Rules

“But I drinks my grog and I stands my watch,
And I eats my normal duff,
And I was engaged for to marry a gal
Which her name was Nancy Huff;

“But the *Reuben Ranzo* hooked herself
As she rambled around the Horn,
And she foundered and sank on a lonely bank—
A mournful coast forlorn!

“And I am alone in a jungle wild,
And all I gets to eat
Is cockatoos, and monks what use
Their little hands for feet;

“I mourns and mourns and I eats and eats
Upon that sorrowful strand.
Till a gradual doubt arises in me
As to whether a foot is a hand;

“I eats and I eats, and I mourns and mourns—
And my beard like feathers grew,
And my nose to a peak like a parrot's beak,
And I screamed like a cockatoo;

“And I eats and eats, and I mourns and mourns
Till a ship sails over the blue—
Which they lassos me from a cocoanut tree
And sells me into a Zoo;

Prefaces

“Alas for love! My Nancy seen
Me frolicking in my cage
And all of her love turns into scorn,
And she says to me in rage:

“‘I never will marry a man who screams
With a voice like a cockatoo!
Nor a man who swings from bars and rings—
You are changed, you are changed—adieu!’ ”

And I left him alone with his grief, and passed
Sadly along the street;
But I flung him some peanuts to pay for his tale—
And he picked them up with his feet.

If you should meet with the Rightful Heir
to the Throne of Borneo, listen to him with a
seemly reverence, for (like his father before
him) he is a sensitive man.

*Preface to the Diary of a
Failure*





Preface to the Diary of a Failure

THE gentleman who wrote this Diary and asked us to furnish an introduction for it, advises us that there are a great many lies in it.

They were necessary, he explains, in order that the protagonist of the drama might continue to command the sympathy of the author.

And he has adopted the proper method of approach, in our opinion. We have known him for years; he has just put his autobiography into our hands; the book exhales himself; it smacks and smells of his personal flavor and aroma; the book and the man are of a piece.

And he has attained this unity of himself with his utterance through a conscientious falsification of the mere brute facts of his external life.

In order to write a thousand pages a man

Prefaces

must keep enthusiastic concerning the subject of his narrative; and if the subject is himself he will scarcely be able to draw the material for this continuing enthusiasm from what he has actually done so largely as from what he should have done and what he intended to do.

Perhaps a quotation from the Diary itself will assist in illustrating our friend's literary method. The following sentences are from Chapter 24:

"I never argued with my wife's mother nor answered any of her fantastic accusations; and on this occasion I told her courteously, but with finality, that while it was not true that I had set fire to the sheets and to her daughter's night clothing by smoking in bed, yet it would be none of her affair had I really done so, and I insisted upon my right to smoke at any hour and in any place that pleased me. I added that in case she was not prepared to acquiesce in this I would be compelled to leave her house at once, taking my wife and the five children with me; and I told her plainly that if I were forced to this radical step she need not expect

Preface to the Diary of a Failure

to be a welcome visitor in whatever home it might be my fortune to establish. My wife's mother broke down and wept at this, withdrew her unjust charges and begged me to stay and use her humble house as my own until such time as I should be solicited to accept some employment compatible with my talents and dignity. I finally consented to forgive her and remain, but I warned her, too, that she must see to it in the future that the boarders treated me with more consideration . . . ”

Grossly speaking, our friend lied.

The facts were that he confessed to having smoked his pipe in bed, setting fire to the covers and burning his wife, who ran through the corridors of the boarding house, between a double row of alarmed guests, screaming, and with a screaming baby in her arms, to her mother's room. The mother ordered the author of the Diary from the house at once; himself, his wife and his two older children pleaded with the old lady until daybreak before she would relent and allow him to remain.

Grossly speaking, we say, our friend lied.

Prefaces

But the world should learn to speak and judge more gently and more truthfully.

The facts, our friend felt, did not represent him. His body dwelt in that house, among brawling relatives-in-law, uninteresting children of whom he happened to be the father, and jeering boarders—but that was not the truth about the man as he knew himself; his soul, his essential ego, lived otherwhere, beyond the accidents of fate and untouched by the insults of chance and circumstance. Should he not be true to his soul, which was of a quality that rejected such scenes as false to itself, automatically expunging all that was alien to it?

Had he related the mere physical facts he would have lied about his spirit, that eternal thing; but with a superior honesty he chose to deny the irrelevant, the material, the temporal.

There are two sorts of truth about all of us. There is that which the world sees, and that which we know. Our deeds, which are known to all men, too often appear to us to be strange, inexplicable libels on ourselves.

They are the falsehoods told about us by life.

Preface to the Diary of a Failure

And should we begin to accept them as the truth, we are dead spiritually. For if we do not feel to-day stronger and more courageous and more moral than we were yesterday—than the accidents of yesterday mendaciously made us out to be—how shall we be able to face to-morrow?

The great lesson is to forgive yourself.

These diaries that we are always writing—let us steadfastly believe that the point of view in them is the same as that adopted by the Recording Angel.

Look at each day and say, this is *another* day! My sin and sloth and foolishness of yesterday I utterly repudiate. It was not I. My soul did not do *that* nor consent to it. I was caught in a corner by circumstance, and clubbed into doing this or that—but the deed does not represent me; I am something better to-day, I will be something better to-morrow.

This is another day!—shall we cloud the new dawn o'er with a mist of sighs and useless regrets? Let us forgive our own trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

*Foreword to a Literary
Censor's Autobiography*



Foreword to a Literary Censor's Autobiography

THE gentleman who has written the tale of his life at length in this volume is employed by a Vice Commission to ferret out obscenities in works of art. In our estimation he is doing a most important work.

Censors are necessary, increasingly necessary, if America is to avoid having a vital literature. There is a knocking at the gate. The artist is knocking at the gate. If he gets in he will report to us what we already know—that Duncan has been murdered. And if the artist reports life to us as it is, and as we all know it to be . . . well, that would be too frightful to contemplate!

If we are to continue entirely comfortable

we must escape the truth by crucifying all those who come bearing witness to it.

The gentleman whose book we introduce has a charming mind. Thoroughly to appreciate it, one must read the entire volume which he has produced. But he has a kind of prologue and epitome of his own, which gives a glimpse of it; our note and his prologue (which follows) are sufficient introduction:

I showed an inclination towards my Life Work at a very early age.

I could not have been more than ten years old when I reported to my Teacher at School that Myrtle Snodgrass, a little girl who sat in the next seat to me, had written a naughty word upon her slate.

"How do you know it is a naughty word?" asked Teacher.

"Because," I answered, "Myrtle Snodgrass jerked her slate away and would not let me read it."

"Then you did not see it?"

"No, ma'am." I have always been truthful.

Foreword to a Censor's Autobiography

“Perhaps,” said Teacher, “it was not a word at all. You have accused Myrtle of something that you cannot prove. It is you who have been naughty, Harold! You have no right to look at Myrtle’s slate if she does not wish you to. And you have reported something you do not know to be true.”

I have always been persecuted in my efforts to safeguard the public morals.

“Teacher,” I said, “if it wasn’t a naughty word, then it must have been a naughty picture.”

“Why do you say that, Harold?”

“Teacher, she had been showing her slate to Willie Simms and they had been laughing over it. And when I tried to see too she jerked it away.”

I still think my logic was unassailable, child though I was. I still believe that my deductions were quite justified by the circumstances. For in the years since then I have had it borne in upon me, on many, many occasions, that words, phrases, allusions, which I cannot readily understand or which are deliberately hidden

Prefaces

from me, are usually capable of some construction not altogether proper. It is always safe to infer, when people refuse to explain to one, that their real and secret meanings will not bear explanation.

I told my father, who was a member of the school board, that the teacher had scolded me for reporting something so naughty about a little girl that I did not like to go into details, and he took the matter up officially.

Perhaps even then the Teacher would not have lost her position, but I was able to supply supplementary evidence which (my instinct told me even at that early age) tended to prove that this teacher was no fit person to form the minds of ingenuous little children. Arriving at the schoolhouse earlier than any of the other pupils one morning, and earlier than the Teacher herself, I found her desk unlocked. It was usually locked—a suspicious thing in itself, I felt. Naturally, finding it unlocked I ransacked it, in the interests of the public welfare . . . and, I may add, my father had suggested something of the sort.

Foreword to a Censor's Autobiography

I found two damning photographs. Abominable pictures! One was the picture of Teacher herself, surrounded by several other young women, all in the abbreviated costume of the basket-ball team of a girls' college. This might not have been so bad in itself . . . though it is a sort of thing I do not approve . . . but near by was the photograph of a young man partially nude. He had on the costume of a college sprinter . . . nothing else!

The Teacher later told the school board that it was a picture of her brother. But, as my father pointed out, it might just as readily have been the photograph of some one to whom she was not related. And the relationship itself, my father justly said, counted for little against the impropriety of leaving such things where they were likely to fall into the hands of innocent children such as his little son.

Even then the majority of the school board were unwilling to dismiss Teacher on an out and out charge of improper conduct; but my father and some of his right thinking friends were strong enough in the community to get rid

of her on another charge. It was generally understood, however, that her services were really dispensed with because of some unnamed immorality . . . my father and his friends were too just and too merciful to relate the details publicly. I am proud and happy to testify that, because of the cloud under which she left our godly little city, this perverter of the morals of childhood was never afterward able to obtain a position as a teacher. There was nothing definite ever published against her . . . but people generally seemed to feel, even as I, child that I was, had felt, that there must be something wrong somewhere . . . something wrong.

Something wrong!

How often I have felt that! How unerringly my soul has reacted to the aroma of evil! I say it (not with worldly pride, for that is sinful, but with the satisfaction of the used and useful weapon in the holy war against iniquity) —I say with satisfaction that I have a sixth sense which directs me infallibly to the detection of obscenity.

Foreword to a Censor's Autobiography

Authors may talk of art, and chatter of its relation to life—they may prattle of truth and duty—but they cannot hide from me the carnal thought and the lascivious intention behind their specious innocence!

A thing is either pure or it is impure. My sixth sense informs me at once. No argument is necessary. My spirit is either shocked or it is not shocked.

It is not necessary to understand art in order to condemn it.

I love to sit in my library with the hundreds of books and pictures I have condemned about me and think that I have been of some use to my generation. In my mind's eye, as I run my physical eye over the book bindings, I can see the improper passages quivering and glowing inside the volumes.

I know them all by heart!

And I thrill again to each one of them, with the same thrill I felt when I first discovered it and realized that I was about to render another service to society. I tremble, and at

Prefaces

times my eyes fill with tears, as I repeat them aloud.

And when I am gone my son will take up the work, I am proud to say. Only last night, as I crept down the basement stairs to the kitchen to listen at the door and make sure the housemaid was conducting herself properly with her young man, I stumbled over my son. He was already at the keyhole. I patted his head in the darkness and thanked heaven that I had been rewarded in such a child. I patted his head and kissed him on his white, young brow, his pure young brow, and we knelt together there.

*Note to a Chapter on
Journalism*



BY ODOR
TUSKY BARNARD
MANAGING JANITOR

Note to a Chapter on Journalism

JULIAN STREET, in his book, "American Adventures," devotes a chapter to Georgia journalism. There was one character connected with Georgia journalism fifteen years ago whom Mr. Street does not mention; but we remember him better than many a more Caucasian person.

His name was Tusky Barnard, he was of a light chocolate color and was the Managing Janitor of the Atlanta *News* when we went to work there.

Tusky named himself Managing Janitor. The Managing Editor of the paper had a strength—we will not say a weakness, for the habit had such a grip on him—for pasting little bulletins about this, that and the other thing

Prefaces

all over the office. Tusky admired these bulletins immensely, and presently began to put up bulletins of his own, which ran about like this:

PLEAS REMEMBER CLENESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS DOAN THROW CIGAR ENDS ON FLOOR BY ORDER TUSKY BARNARD MANAGING JANITOR.

PLEAS REMEMBER LADYS IS FLOURS OF THE EARTH OFFIS BOYS DOAN SPIT ON FLOOR THEY GETS THEIR DRES IN IT BY ODOR TUSKY BARNARD MANAGING JANITOR.

We made a collection of some twenty or more of Tusky's bulletins; but we have lost them and remember only four or five.

We naturally supposed that Tusky's name was Tuskegee, and one day we asked him. But no.

"Mah gran'ma done name me," Tusky explained. "Mah full name is Tuskyrory Borealis Bah'na'd, afteh a river whah mah gran'ma been bo'n."

We gathered that there must have been some confusion in his mind of the Tuscarawas River with the Aurora Borealis, but it was a good

Note to a Chapter on Journalism

name, and Tusky liked it all the better, he said, because it had a religious sound.

"I'se a chu'ch niggah," he said. And he used to tell us how he had "come through."

Tusky's conversion was very similar in manner to that of St. Paul. Tusky had been struggling—not to be converted, but to avoid conversion—for weeks. But the Spirit was hot on his trail—it dogged him, he said. (Just as the protagonist of Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven," is pursued.) Tusky was a "Free Thinkler"; and he was proud of being a "Free Thinkler"; because it made him different from the other negroes, but at the same time he was more than a little frightened by the Satanic eminence to which it raised him.

One day, while a negro revival meeting was in full swing in his neighborhood, Tusky took to his bed, sick, a prey to conflicting emotions.

"Mah bruddah an' mah sisteh'n law think hit's a sickness o' de flesh," Tusky told us, "but in mah hea't Ah knows it am a sickness of de sperrit."

He covered himself with blankets, he said,

Prefaces

for he had chills. One after another all the negroes prominently connected with the revival meeting visited him, and prayed and exhorted beside his bed.

“But Ah laid dah an’ I shivah an’ I shivah,” said Tusky, “an’ Ah helt off de pruspahation. Ah had er thought ef de pruspahation come de glory o’ de Lawd would come erlong wiv it. An’ Ah didn’t want to lose de glory o’ bein’ a Free Thinkler. An’ fo’ free days Ah laid on dat bed an’ wrassle agin de Lawd, de prayin’ gwine on ovah me all de time. An’ yet, all de while, in mah hea’t Ah was wishin’ de pruspahation would start an’ de Lawd would come.”

And, at the end of three days, so Tusky told us, the perspiration came. It was in the night that the perspiration came; there was a little sprinkle of snow on the ground—we are not sure but that Tusky staged the drama on Christmas Eve; he was quite capable of it—and with the perspiration came a voice.

“Hit am a Voice dat fill de whole Hebben and Ea’th,” Tusky said, “an’ hit holler out free times: ‘*Tuskyrory Bohealis, yo’ Free*

Note to a Chapter on Journalism

Thinkler yo'! Why pussacute me, niggah! Tuskyrory Bohealis, Free Thinkler, quit yo' pussacutin' me, niggah!"

Tusky rose, all covered with "pruspahation" as he was, and staggered out into the yard. And there he saw what St. Paul saw—a light; a great light in the sky. And he heard again the Voice that cried: "*Tuskyrory Bohealis, yo' Free Thinkler yo', quit yo' pussacutin' me, niggah!"*

He fell down, he used to tell us—and he told us the story regularly every Friday afternoon, which was pay day, and we always gave him a dime to go towards the purchase of a new Bible, as he said he had read his old one so hard it was about worn out—he fell down on the ground, in the snow, and lost consciousness.

"When mahse'f came to mahse'f agin," he said, "dah Ah was, er layin' en de fros', an' wiv nothin' ovah me but er bah'b-wiah fence. An' all de postes er dat fence had a ball er light onter de tops, an' de fiah was er runnin' back and fo'th erlong de wiahs er dat fence,

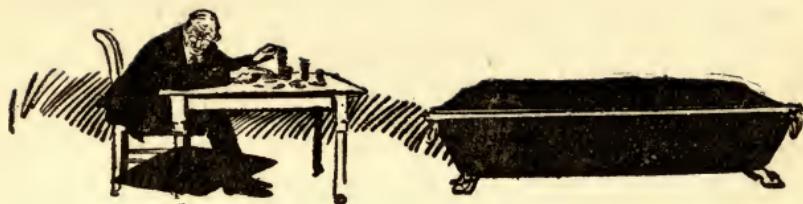
Prefaces

f'om pos' ter pos', an' de big Voice was er shoutin' f'om de balls of fiah once mo': '*Tuskyrory Bohealis, yo' no 'count Free Thinklin' niggah yo', why does yo' pussacute me?*'

"Ah jes' fotch er groan," Tusky would say, "an' all de Free Thinklin' hit pass out er me. An' Ah say, 'Lawd, Lawd, ef yo' fo'give me I'se gwine fo' ter fo'give you, and dey ain't no reason why we cain't get erlong togeddah in peace an' posterity f'om now on. Ef yo' take away yo' fiah Ah's gwine ter stop mah pussacutin'!"

The fire vanished, as a sign that the bargain was acceptable, and Tusky went back into the house filled with a great peace, which, he said, had, "aboden" with him ever since.

*Foreword to a Miser's
Autobiography*



Foreword to a Miser's Autobiography

I AM dying, and after I am dead the newspapers will print little articles calling me a miser. But no one will find any gold about here. I have taken care of that.

I have a scrap book filled with pieces which tell of the deaths of other men called misers. I know just what they will say of me, the newspapers! Some of them will have editorials calling attention to my "wasted life," and saying that even I got no enjoyment from it.

The fools that write such things!—what do they know?

What can any one who is not of that guild of rare souls, so coarsely miscalled by the world, ever know of the passionate secret romance of an existence such as mine has been?

There is gold all about me here—one thousand and twenty-seven ten-dollar pieces, an even

two thousand and ten of the double eagles, seven hundred and thirty-four five dollar pieces and five thousand of the ones, lacking just three. (Add it up—I know how much it comes to.) Each piece has its story, its little drama of human life, and maybe of death. And some of those stories I know, too. There are pieces that are like books with half the chapters gone to me; I know a little of the tale and I can finish it as I choose. No two gold pieces are alike any more than if they were people.

I never cared for paper money or for silver, except to get it changed into gold. And I never cared much for jewels either. Land and gold are the two great realities. But I never wanted land. Land is stupid and slow, but gold is like blood and thought.

I've had my coffin built, and it isn't like any one else's coffin. It is large; enormously large, and enormously heavy. Your spendthrift fools would call it an extravagance, but I have always known when I got my money's worth.

Heavy, it is, and built of steel. But the sides are not solid. There is a space four inches

Foreword to a Miser's Autobiography

broad all around between the outer and inner skins of steel. After I fit the cunning panels shut it looks like solid steel. And when the gold goes between the outer and inner skins it will be heavy enough to fool them, too.

For there is where the gold will be, and I will be in the midst of it, till I rise again. For I believe in the resurrection of the body, just as they say in church. And body means body.

Some nights I put it all in there, big double handfuls at a time, and lie down in the coffin and pretend I am dead already. And I feel it pulsing and quivering behind the steel skin. The gold and I understand each other; we always have.

And sometimes I talk to it and it talks to me. "I am the fine clothes you never wore," it says. "And the oysters and venison you never ate. And the wine and fancy drinks you never treated yourself to. And the women you never bought. Don't you wish you had spent me for those things? Eh?"

And I laugh and rock and roll in the coffin,

Prefaces

and that sets the gold to clinking as if it were laughing, too.

We understand each other.

It warms me and thrills me; it beats like blood through the coffin and through me, and it will go on beating like blood all the years I lie dead in the midst of it until I rise again and get my golden harp and golden crown. For I never did anything bad, and they are coming to me.

It is all the fine clothes and the fancy drinks and the women, the gold is. It is the essence of them. It is the blood of the world. Fools spend gold for such things, and have them only for a moment. I denied myself, and I have the essence of them forever. I used to think, sometimes, that I would startle the town some night with a big splurge, just to laugh at the idiots who thought and said I didn't know how to enjoy life. A thousand times I planned what I would do. And every time I planned it I got as much out of it as if I'd really done it. And gradually I came to see that that was where the real enjoyment lay—in the power to cut

Foreword to a Miser's Autobiography

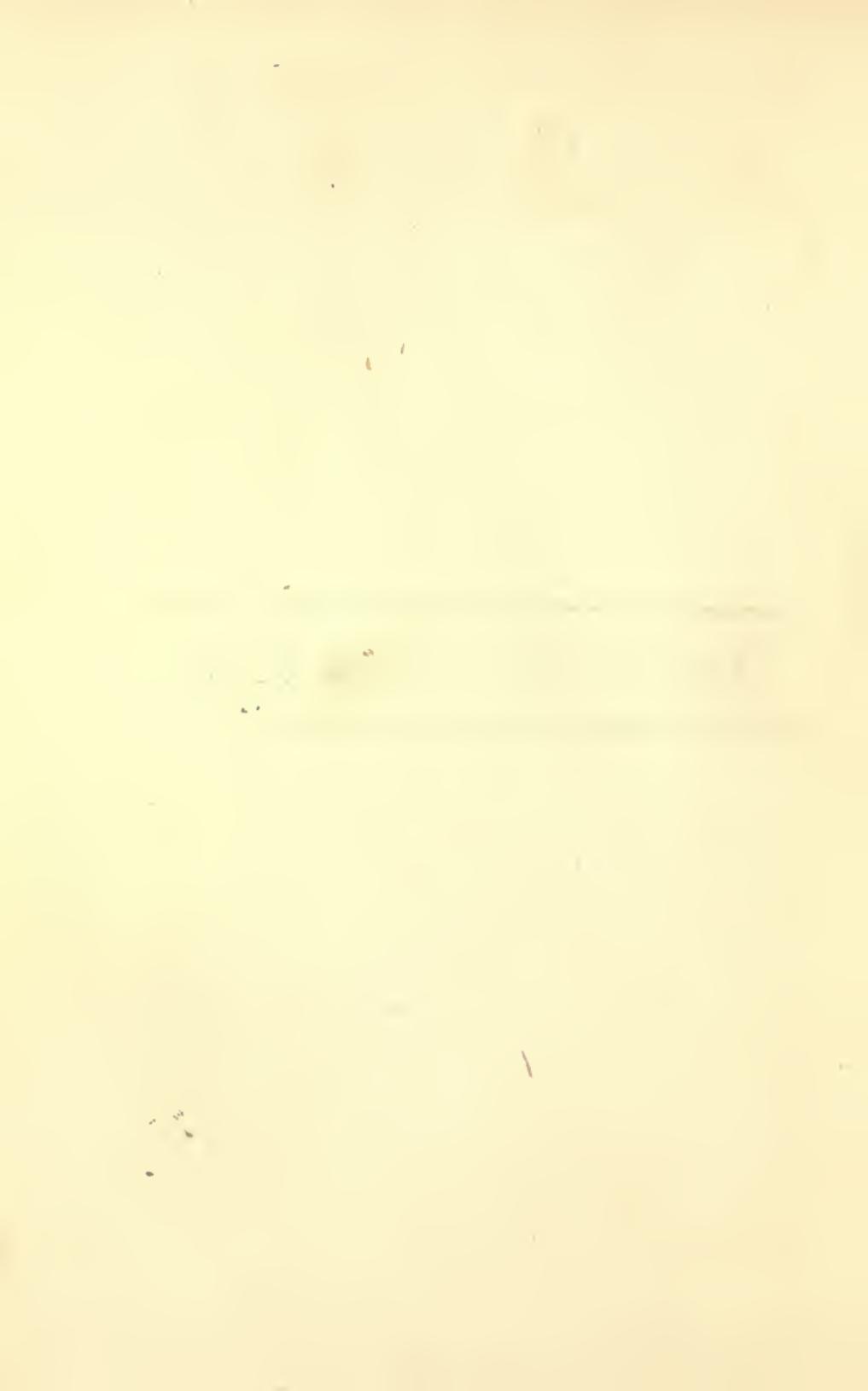
loose if I wanted to. And then I understood that the essence and the spirit of it all are in the gold.

But most people are too crude to get their pleasure out of savoring the essence and aroma of a thing. But I have, and that way I've saved my body from contamination, and I've saved my soul from sin, and I've had all the essence of it, too, and I've got the gold by me yet, into the bargain.

And it will be with me till the last trump blows over land and sea and the dead arise. Arise in the body, mind you. And body means body. And golden crowns are golden crowns. If anything else had been meant it would have been easy enough to say so.

I've lived life to the full. I've been right in the blood of life, handled it and measured it and washed and rolled in it. And it makes me chuckle to think of the writers who pity misers! Don't pity me! Happy I've lived and happy I will die, and happy I will rise again from the dead with all my gold about me and go up to get my promised crown.

Preface to a Check Book





Preface to a Check Book X

FOR years we cultivated a pleasing confusion concerning how much money we had. Consulting the stubs in our check book did us no good. We never kept it properly balanced.

Pleasing confusion, we say. The hazy uncertainty pleased us because we were that kind of an ass; we affected an attitude with regard to money. Many young men who are trying to be artists of one sort or another *do* affect an attitude. They find something fine and dashing in spending a week's salary in a few hours; they will be half-starved for days; they consider that rather interesting also. It sets them apart (they think) from their more colorless brethren. They lend and borrow easily; in their own conceit they are exhibiting a generous scorn of material things, rebuking the gross earth, establishing kinship with the more ethereal element.

But money is life. Not material life only. It touches the soul. Who steals our purse steals not trash, but our blood, time, muscle, nervous force, our power to help others, our future possibility of turning out creditable work.

He may even steal our good name; there are not wanting instances where innocent men might have cleared themselves if they had had the money or the credit to command events.

Men are dying in bitterness and in the shadow of disgrace for want of a little gold. If a thief robs us we may be able to understand why he does it, but smite him we will not forbear to do for all of that. He has aimed a dagger at our heart and swung a bludgeon at our head; he strikes at our life who grasps at our dollars; it is our blood or his.

But we don't think we would imprison the thief. Even crooked bankers and all others who pick the pockets of the poor, turning the bodies and souls, the blood and hopes of their thousands of struggling victims into gold—even them we would not have imprisoned. They

Preface to a Check Book

should be beheaded or shot. Not hanged, nor killed by electricity. Hanging is too often done by bungling stranglers. And when a man is killed by electricity—what doctor surely knows that there are not some moments of intense agony between the initial shock and death, during which the being is submerged in a bath of flame? None of the doctors who deny this has ever been killed by electricity. But beheading is instant death. The French have preserved the truly civilized feeling about this matter. If it is determined that a man should die, that man is already dead; he has acquired a certain dignity through his death; it is a ghastly impropriety to risk letting him suffer any more than is necessary; he has a right to depart quickly and painlessly—to depart tragically, with none of the writhings of mere melodrama.

It is possible that it is not right to kill people at all; that view has been held sincerely for a long time by many people. But if any deserves death it is certainly the thief on a large scale who ruins so many lives. When he loots a bank men who have saved and struggled for

years give up hope, growing children lose the chance for education; this, that or the other girl may be forced into prostitution; youths who have been striving and suffering and over-working against the time when they might learn a profession or an art or a business are flung back into the slums; talent is crushed; maybe, now and then, even genius is blasted. The hand of the thief reaches into the inwards of society and filches the stuff of life. The future is impoverished of the soul that would have come to bloom.

The essential sin of the thief is that he cannot rob humanity without robbing God; these worlds, these stars on which we dwell, need more life of a better quality; great men help God create; a thief is a rat in the granary which holds the seeds of heaven; money, properly come by and properly used, is a sacred thing. An honest financier, who really serves the world, may be something of a priest.

The serious artist, if he is to commune with Heaven, must, above all men, have leisure here on earth. And leisure, that is money. The

Preface to a Check Book

priest, the prophet, must have leisure. He must have freedom. He must have time for reflection. Christ told a certain rich young man: "Sell all thou hast and follow me." He meant, follow me into freedom, into leisure, into immortality, away from your worldly pre-occupation, from the worries that clutter up your life.

Christ and His disciples found freedom, leisure, time for reflection, by avoiding manual labor and depending on their friends for physical support. But some one did the work on which they lived; those friends were in a financial position to help along a little; Christ did not scorn money honestly come by; He used it; He lived for months on the thrift of those friends; their thrift, their money, helped that rare soul to show Heaven to Earth; with divine assurance He marched forward, confident that whatever of the material world He needed would be forthcoming; that the stuff of life which He required lay in store for him.

But *we* have no such assurance; *we* have no miracle of loaves and fishes to fall back upon;

Prefaces

we are not divine vagabonds; we have nothing but our human thrift. We cannot get leisure to think or write or paint or worship by turning actual vagrants; the real vagrant to-day is extremely unromantic and excessively harassed. We have no regal presence to command food, shelter and time.

Therefore, coin must be ours.

Money is a spiritual thing. Ass that *we* were — who used to pride ourself secretly on a certain loose attitude toward our check book! What good, we would like to know, did draw poker or poetry ever do us? If we had let poker and poetry alone in our youth we might now have the leisure to sit down and write a book instead of merely writing a preface. We think it might have turned into a book of sermons.

*Preface to the Autobiography
of an Old-Fashioned
Anarchist*



Preface to the Autobiography of an Old-Fashioned Anarchist

THE person to whose memoirs this note is a preface was a benign and fatherly being.

He had a great tenderness for all humanity.

“When I was a young man, at the outset of my career,” he sometimes said, “I used to think with regret of the many Innocent Bystanders endangered, and often killed, in the dynamiting I was engaged in for the advancement of the Cause. But as I grow older and observe more of the world’s injustice I have come to a different way of thinking. Is it not a kindness to any man to remove him from this life? If he is really innocent, if he is as yet uncontaminated by his mundane environment, the greater is the service I do him, the more disillusionment and suffering and despair I save him from. When I weep now it is for those who still live, for those beyond the reach of

my activities, rather than for those who have been suddenly and mercifully launched upon eternity. Do you think that I myself would have consented to live for eighty-seven years had it not been for the consciousness of my Mission in the World?"

This point of view indicates, I think, a nature truly and profoundly religious; it shows the sacrificial spirit. The Professor—his friends called him the Professor—felt that death was best for all men, himself included. But in spite of this wish to die he was willing to keep on living that he might bring death to others. He did not consult his own desires, he was guided by a higher thought, giving freely to his fellow men the boon of destruction which he denied to himself; he subdued his private inclination and did what he conceived to be his public duty sternly to the end, carefully avoiding the police and escaping the legal penalty for what the world would call his crimes.

I say sternly; and stern he was in a sense; his moral parts were assembled about a stiff spine of austerity. But there was no vain ex-

ternal parade of this quality; it was his sweetness that one perceived first and remembered longest. He even had a certain gentle whimsicality of manner, knowing well that a sour aspect and a frowning habit are no essentials of true spiritual dignity, but may often accompany the reverse. Indeed, on the strong rock of this nature there grew and flourished many green and floral traits. It was, for instance, his pleasantly eccentric custom, when he had achieved what our society calls an atrocity, to write a comic song about it (commonly in the early ballad style) and chant it, to his own accompaniment on the piano, at some jolly party of his intimates.

Young men especially loved him; and, while he was guide and inspirer to their developing minds, he was fond of companioning them in many of their genial pranks and lively vices. Simplicity and integrity were the foundations of his character, but he also had his subtleties and his flashes of psychic insight; one day he emerged from a half trance of introspection with this remark: "Vice is necessary to an

Idealist, otherwise he would soar too far above the world to which he bears his message; he would lose touch with it and understanding of it. I must go in more for Vice!"

And he did, resolutely and on principle. At first he did not like it; later, he confessed, he loved it for its own sake. "Thus," he commented, with his winsome smile, combing his long white beard with his nervous fingers, "thus does Duty reward those who are steadfast by becoming Pleasure!"

It is melancholy to have to record that a being so pure and unselfish died of a broken heart. But that is the world's way! He had grown old and feeble, and white-headed in the service of Anarchy—and in the end Anarchy pushed him aside!

It was over a purely technical matter that he quarreled with his immediate superiors in the organization, but if the break had not come about in one way it would have come about in another: The Professor held by the received traditions of Anarchy; he believed in a steady and sane advance along the road determined

Preface to Old-Fashioned Anarchist

in the past by the fathers of the cause. He was a classicist, a conservative—an academician, as it were; he abhorred anything radical; the linked historical continuity of deed and deed was his ideal. I fear he was a trifle pedantic, as so many virtuous and sincere men are.

“The kind of Anarchy that was good enough for my grandsire is good enough for me!” he used to say.

An ingenious but flighty young Anarchist, a clever lad but very disinclined to recognize authority, invented an Infernal Machine the explosive principle of which was not dynamite and urged it upon the Professor at a meeting of the little group over which the old man presided.

It shocked the Professor to the soul.

“Never,” he cried, “has anything but dynamite been used since its first manufacture. And it never *shall* be used while I retain command! It is against all the traditions of Anarchy! There is no precedent for it, young man. The proposal is impudent, subversive, revolutionary!”

Prefaces

He was, I believe, called an obstructionist; but the old man made a bitter fight. He was finally thrown out of the organization, by younger men in control, as insubordinate, obedience to law and discipline being one of the essentials of practical Anarchy. Or so I gather from the old man's book, to which I must refer you for the details of his struggle against the youthful leaders with their new ideas, for the story of his defeat and for the melancholy cry from his heart with which his volume concludes.

I can never read it without tears.

*Preface to an Unpublished
Volume*



Preface to an Unpublished Volume X

SOME fifteen years ago, when we were working for a paper down South, it was our habit to produce at least three poems a day. And what wonderful poems they were! All about the old gods, and love, and . . . and all that sort of thing.

We can praise them, and there is no one to contradict us, for none of them was ever printed, and none of them ever will be. We believed in them, at the time, more than we have ever been able to believe in anything since . . . nothing comes up to those verses of ours that are gone forever.

We had a large wooden box under our desk that would hold, we should say, between two and three bushels of poetry. When we finished a poem we dropped it into the box. For three long golden years we threw poems into that

box, stamping them down from time to time, and there must have been a thousand poems there . . . all about love and the old gods and the red morning of the world and the sudden ghosts that go whizzing through the moonlight. It was our intention when the box got so full that we could not trample another poem into it to dig them all out, choose a couple of hundred of the best ones, publish them, and instantly become famous. So, being absolutely sure that these were wonderful poems, we bided our time . . . we wrote, we gloated over them, we held them back from print, we dreamed of immortality and we bided our time. How we would sit and look at that box and worship those poems!

The newspaper which employed us employed also a negro janitor named Henry, a genial savage with the scars of razor slashings all over his neck and face, and a genuine taste for Shakespearian rhetoric, who well understood that the box beneath our desk contained works of art and not waste paper. Henry had once worked in some theater in Memphis; he had

Preface to an Unpublished Volume

soaked in hundreds of lines of Shakespeare, which he would deliver for us on very slender encouragement. And he understood them, too . . . especially well did he understand lines that promised bloodshed or lines that were heavy with odor, or gaudily colored. For a dime he would opine that the poems in the box under our desk were likely as good as Shakespeare; for a quarter they were probably better. And this was evidence of a kindly nature in Henry, as we never read any of the poems to him. That would have been beneath our dignity. We were dignified, then; we cultivated dignity consciously—for were we not about to appear before the world as a poet? We practiced the mental gesture, and secretly we rehearsed a number of physical poses as well. We went so far as to wonder whether to have our picture taken with some kind of a shawl-damning about our shoulders . . .

You see, we believed in those poems in that box. There were a thousand of them . . . all about love and starlight and young gods rampaging across the young umbrageous worlds.

And Spring. Those poems! Nobody will ever read them, now. Henry came nearer to hearing them than any one else . . . perhaps Henry used to sneak in at night and read them. But we will never get any of them back by combing Henry's memory. For Henry, by this time, must have been lynched or legally hanged or finally and fatally razored at some convict's coming-out party. Henry was what is known in some parts of the South as a "bad nigger"; he had the soul of an artist, but he was not a peaceful citizen; he should have lived in Renaissance times as the body servant of Benvenuto Cellini.

Henry knew those were poems, and not waste paper, in that box. But Henry quit, or was fired, one Saturday night, unbeknown to us, and a negro named George took his place. A new janitor sweeps clean. Before we ever heard of George, before we had an opportunity to lead him to that box of poetry and bump his Guinea skull against it and impress him with its sacred character, George had carried it away. . . . He thought it was waste paper.

Preface to an Unpublished Volume

It was our future . . . it is our past . . . it was what we were born to create and we have never done anything since—oh! well, if you coax us, a thing or two. But nothing like Those Poems. Few have—by Heaven! we swear it! There were only two things that could have happened to those poems: either they should have been published, and we should have died of consumption on their publication, or . . . or, what happened. The poems perished. We live—if you choose to call it life, this existence since, knowing that we wrote those poems and knowing that we will never again write anything like them. For us to have lived on after the poems died, dwindling from year to year, is the more tragic, because there is about the whole thing an element of the comic, too. And how pathetic that we should have become sufficiently reconciled to the comedy so that we can actually discuss it! We have never really given a good-goddam for anybody's poetry since, not even our own. It put a crimp into us. To have been a Milton—not mute and inglorious, but vocal and glorious—at least a

beginning Milton—and then to become a column conductor! To be finished by a Guinea negro named George with a skull like a piece of granite—a gargoyle leaping up to butt the viscera out of a seraph! For those were good poems . . . they were all about love and what the graves say to one another at midnight and about the waters before the face of God was on the waters.

All the waste paper in that place was customarily taken to the basement and tied into immense bales and shipped back to the paper mills. We gutted a dozen of those bales, handling every scrap ourself, but we never found as much as one slender little blonde-haired sonnet.

Well . . . well . . . it is something to look back on! It is something to brag about! We all need that as we grow older. When most people boast about what they did or were fifteen years ago, a fact is likely to pop up and confute them—but we shall go on believing in those poems and sighing over them and idolizing them and not a soul on earth can spring

Preface to an Unpublished Volume

one of them on us and prove how rotten they were—that is, unless Henry read them and is not yet hanged. Heard melodies, as Keats says, are sweet, but those unheard . . .

Preface to a Book of Prefaces

Preface to a Book of Prefaces

HAVING written so many Prefaces, without producing any of the Books, it seems, on the whole, better to put forth this Book without any Preface. It is not exactly the Book we intended it should be, anyhow. But Books never are. The next Book we write, we intend shall be a Volume with a Moral Purpose. That is our present intention . . . but it may turn out to be a Volume with a Moral Porpoise. Things of that sort happen to us.

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:
Tel. No. 642-3405

Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

RECD LD MAR 16 1:1 PM 38

YB 73484

424603

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

